MARITIME LABOUR IN INDIA

By the Same Author

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

MARITIME LABOUR IN INDIA

BY

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FOREWORD

Mr. Dinkar Desai has done very useful work in bringing to the notice of the Government of India and of the Indian public, through the pages of his book *Maritime Labour in India*, the actual conditions of life and work of Indian seamen or *lascars* as they are called, and suggesting remedies for improving those conditions. Seamen form an important section of transport workers. But their problem has to be treated separately, as their conditions differ from those of other transport workers. To large numbers of Indian seamen, especially those coming from Bengal, Malabar, Goa and Gujarat, seafaring is a hereditary profession and they do not generally take to other occupations. Even in modern times, seamen's work involves greater risk to life than other occupations except perhaps mining. Not only when they are at sea, but even when they are in ports waiting to be engaged, they are away from their homes. Their organisations are not strong on account of the fact that very few of them can take a continuous interest in them. Indian shipping being not much developed and most of the Indian seamen having to work on foreign ships, it is difficult to give them protection through Indian legislation. As compared to European seamen, there is obvious discrimination to the disadvantage of Indian seamen as regards the accommodation provided and the rations given. Moreover, as the Indian seaman has to work under conditions which are inferior

to those under which the European works, the latter naturally resents the unfair competition caused by the recruitment of Indian seamen. Improvement in the conditions of life and work of Indian seamen is, therefore, a problem in which both Indian seamen and foreign seamen are equally interested.

The important problems which concern the welfare of seamen are those of methods of recruitment, conditions of life and work on board ship, conditions in ports during the period of waiting, and protection against the risks of sickness, unemployment and old age. The problem of recruitment of maritime labour is a class by itself, as seamen work not only outside the national frontiers, but on open sea cut off from land. State control over recruitment is necessary in order to prevent their being engaged without adequate guarantee as regards the conditions under which they have to work. The Government of India have not yet given effect to the proposals of the International Labour Organisation nor even to the recommendations of the Committee appointed by them under the Chairmanship of Mr. (now Sir) A. G. Clow as regards the proper method of recruitment. Indian seamen even now cannot secure employment without offering substantial sums as bribes. This evil is aggravated by the fact that, during the Great War, seamen's employment had abnormally gone up, increasing substantially the number of persons who become dependent upon maritime work. The unemployment

which had resulted at the close of the War still persists, and there is not much hope of its early disappearance on account of the diminution of international trade due to economic depression and also to the spirit of economic nationalism. Till the problem of unemployment is solved by freer international trade and communications and mitigated by a measure of unemployment insurance, it is natural that seamen's organisations should insist upon equitable distribution of the existing employment among those who have been accustomed to derive their maintenance from this occupation. It is time that the Government of India made a serious effort to solve this problem; and the suggestion made by Mr. Desai for the establishment of a Joint Maritime Board, not only as an employment agency, but also as an agency to settle all questions that arise between seamen and their employers, is worthy of consideration.

The evils of long hours of work, low wages and lack of provision against the risk of sickness, unemployment and old age are suffered by Indian seamen in common with other sections of the working class population. But there is sufficient justification for treating the case of seamen as one calling for special and earlier solution, in view of the fact that Indian seamen have to compete with the seamen of European countries who, for safeguarding their standards of life, feel justified in trying to secure the exclusion of Indian seamen from seafaring employment. Indian seamen have no desire

to lower the standards of their comrades in other countries and to base their claim for employment upon the cheapness of their labour. If there is a risk of loss of employment by Indian seamen arising from their insistence on improvements in their conditions of life and work and equal treatment, the risk is well worth taking.

That Indian seamen should not be looked after in Indian ports half so well as foreign seaman is a scandal. If the Government of India which is constitutionally responsible for this subject does not feel its shame, the Provincial Governments of Bombay and Bengal ought. The British shipping companies have obtained constitutional safegurds for their protection against discrimination to their disadvantage. There is some moral responsibility on them to help in securing the removal of the discrimination against Indian seamen whom they employ, not out of charitable motives but for profit.

Finally, a word to the leaders of Indian seamen. There are organisations of seamen both in Bombay and Calcutta. They require to be strengthened, both from the point of view of membership and from the point of view of putting forth every effort to protect the interests of their members and of the community of Indian seamen in general. Seamen, on account of their absence from the headquarters of the Unions, cannot take as full a part in their affairs as other classes of workers can. The leaders of these organisations have a special responsibility to do their work conscientiously, so as to

afford full protection of the interests of those who have put them in charge of their organisations.

I have great pleasure in commending Mr. Desai's book to the attention of the Government of India, the Governments of the maritime Provinces, the shipping companies employing Indian seamen, the trading and travelling public, and the seamen themselves and their leaders. No doubt the number of Indian seamen as compared to the total population is small. But the population they serve is large, and the work they do is of national importance. They, therefore, deserve some attention from us. The knowledge that Indian seamen are being exploited in order to give us cheap means of maritime transportation ought to disturb our complacent indifference. Mr. Desai's book gives us this knowledge based upon accurate facts and sound conclusions supported by trustworthy authorities; and he may feel amply rewarded if he succeeds in rousing the Governmental authorities to make a thorough and impartial enquiry into the conditions of Indian seamen, so that the true state of affairs may be revealed and improvements may be made where they are found to be necessary.

Servants of India Society,
Bombay, *November, 1939.*

N. M. JOSHI

PREFACE

So far, no book dealing with the various problems of Indian seamen has been published. The subject does not seem to have attracted the attention it deserves. Even the exhaustive report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India devotes only nine pages to a discussion of the problems concerning seamen; and the I. L. O. report *Industrial Labour in India* published last year excludes maritime labour from its scope.

An attempt is made in these chapters to survey the conditions of life and work of Indian seamen and to suggest legislative and other measures for their improvement. How far the attempt has succeeded is for the readers to judge. The factual portions of the book are drawn mostly from official reports and documents and the source has been indicated. The conclusions and suggestions are based on personal observations which I was able to make as Secretary of the Seamen's Union, Bombay, and on a study of international standards of maritime labour. If this book helps to make its problems better known and sympathetically understood by the public, and seriously considered by the Governments and the shipping companies concerned, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. N. M. Joshi for writing a Foreword to the book. In fact, it was owing

to his encouragement that I undertook the work, and his criticism and suggestions have been of great value. I have likewise to thank Dr. P. P. Pillai, Director of the Indian Branch of the International Labour Office, for kindly going through the manuscript, for making valuable suggestions and for helping me in other ways. My thanks are also due to Mr. P. G. Kanekar of the Social Service League, Bombay, for revising the manuscript in its final stages and seeing it through the press. But the full responsibility for the opinions expressed in the book rests on me.

Finally, I acknowledge my indebtedness to the University of Bombay for the substantial financial help it has granted towards the cost of publication of this book.

Servants of India Society,
Bombay, *April, 1940.*

DINKAR DESAI

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

India is one of the principal maritime countries of the world. She has a coastline of over 4,000 miles with seven major ports and a large number of minor ports. She has a total coastal and overseas trade of over Rs. 5,000 million per year. About 30 million tons of cargo and three million passengers are carried every year in this trade. But of this vast trade, Indian shipping carries hardly 5 per cent. In the coastal trade of India, Indian shipping at present carries only about 20 per cent. of cargo and eight per cent. of passenger traffic. The total Indian tonnage employed on the Indian coast is only about 23 per cent. of the total tonnage plying on it. The rest of the tonnage is British. In the overseas trade, the share of British shipping is 64.2 per cent., that of foreign shipping is 34.55 per cent. and that of Indian shipping is the negligible proportion of 1.15 per cent. Thus India is without her national shipping at present, though she had a brilliant record in this branch of industry in the past when she was, as it were, the hub of the ancient world and maintained her position as one of the foremost countries of maritime activity.

It is, however, important to remember that India's remarkable commercial intercourse with the old world was, to a great extent, due to the skill and daring of

her seamen. Historical records bear eloquent testimony to the efficiency of Indian sailors. Though India has now lost her national shipping industry, she still continues to supply seamen in large numbers on European ships visiting her ports. Certain Indian communities still possess their ancient seafaring instincts, and make able sailors. But the tragedy of the situation is that Indian seamen are the most exploited among the 'vagabonds of the sea'. Their conditions of life and work make distressing reading. The object of these pages is to give a faithful description of those conditions and to suggest legislative and other measures for their improvement.

1. NUMBER OF INDIAN SEAMEN

In regard to the number of seamen, India occupies the fourth place in the world. According to the latest available information, the number of seamen of different nationalities working on ships in or about 1935 was as follows:

Number of Seamen [1]

Nation	Seamen	Nation	Seamen
Great Britain	1,52,793	Italy	34,723
U. S. A.	94,400	U. S. S. R.	26,943
Japan	71,526	Sweden	22,354
India	59,030	Greece	21,009
France	45,424	Netherlands	19,071
Germany	37,199	Denmark	12,200
Norway	36,387	Finland	10,447
		Spain	10,294

[1] Collected from *Maritime Statistical Handbook.*

Australia	9,446	Canada	3,000
Yugoslavia	6,047	Estonia	2,278
China	5,206	Irish Free State	2,034
New Zealand	4,315	Latvia	1,710
Chile	4,201	Poland	819
Belgium	3,734	Rumania	677
Portugal	3,006	Bulgaria	217

These figures show that the number of Indian seamen exceeds that of any other country excepting Great Britain, the U. S. A. and Japan. Hence the problem of Indian seamen is of importance not only from the national point of view, but also from the point of view of international maritime labour.

It is important to remember that the above figures give only the average number of seamen working on ships at any time of the year, and not the total number of all those who sign on during the course of the year. Many seamen who sign on are employed only for varying periods of less than one year. Hence the total number of those who sign on during any particular year exceeds the number of those in employment on board ship at any time. Thus, during the three years from 1926–27 to 1928-29, the average number of seamen engaged in Calcutta was 58,300 a year and in Bombay 34,600, making a total of nearly 93,000.[2] These figures are somewhat old ; but they are retained because they are the latest available. The figures for recent years must be greater in view of the fact that the

employment of Indian seamen is on the increase. This increased employment of Indian seamen would seem to indicate that they are up to the required standard of efficiency, as otherwise the shipping companies would have employed seamen from other countries. As the number of seamen goes on increasing year by year, their problem assumes increasing importance.

In addition to those who secure employment, a large number of seamen remain unemployed on shore. According to the Geneva statistics, the total number of unemployed Indian seamen was 1,13,000 in July 1935.[3] Coming to the total number of Indian seamen, both employed and unemployed, they are distributed as follows according to the ports to which they belong:

Calcutta	1,40,000
Bombay	70,000
Karachi	25,000
Total	2,35,000

These figures are based on the estimates made by seamen's organisations in Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi, and are included in the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Labour in India. These estimates relate to the year 1930, but no appreciable change has taken place since.

Thus the problem of Indian seamen is a problem

[2] *R. C. L. I., Report*, p. 173

[3] *Maritime Statistical Handbook*, p. 125.

directly concerning more than two lakhs of our people. Supposing that the family of each seaman consists of four persons on an average, the number of those human beings whose livelihood depends on the earnings of Indian seamen exceeds the figure of one million. It is, therefore, needless to emphasise the importance of the problem.

The unemployed seamen, who form nearly two-thirds of their total number, remain in ports for a considerable period of their unemployment. When they go home to their villages, they stay there only for a short time and return to ports in the expectation of getting jobs. Though there is continuous unemployment on a large scale, these men who go home without employment, sometimes for years together, do not give up their distinctive character as seamen. The only bond that connects them to their native villages is nothing but the heart's desire to see those dear and near to them.

2. RECRUITING GROUNDS

This brings us to the question of recruiting grounds for supplying crews to ships and the kind of people who have taken to seafaring life. It must be noted at the very outset that most of the Indian seamen belong to those families whose members have been seamen for generations. With regard to the seamen of Bengal, it can be said that they took to seafaring soon after the arrival of Vasco da Gama in the Court of

Zamorin in the 12th century. Vasco da Gama's countrymen established their sway in the Bay of Bengal inasmuch as they had a king of their own in the Island of Sandvip The people of the sea and river-port towns like Chittagong, Noakhali, Barisal and Sylhet on the Surma river and Dacca on the Buriganga naturally took to seafaring. These places have been all along recruiting grounds for supplying crews to ships. Seamen who hail from Sylhet, Noakhali and Chittagong form the bulk of the engine-room crew, while the deck crew consists mainly of people coming from Noakhali and Chittagong. The saloon department is generally manned by persons from Calcutta, though there is a good sprinkling of Goans also.

While Calcutta seamen are all drawn from the province of Bengal, Bombay crews are not confined to the borders of Bombay province. The great bulk of the deck crews that are recruited at Bombay are the natives of Malabar in Madras province and are Muslims by religion. It is a matter of history that seafaring among the Malabaris dates from the dim past of the middle ages when there was a brisk trade between Arabia and India. In the 12th century when the Zamorin had complete sway over the Bay of Bengal, the enterprising Arabian sailors contributed greatly in making Calicut an important port. The seafaring traditions among the present Malabaris may be traced to the close contact of Arabian sailors with the people of

Malabar. Malabari seamen began to migrate to Bombay ever since it became a port of considerable importance. The other seamen belonging to the deck department are the Kharwas who come from Surat, Daman and the adjoining territory. They are Hindus by religion, and are skilful and intrepid sailors. A large portion of the engine-room crew consists of Pathans and Punjabi Muslims. There are also a few engine-room workers who come from such distant places as Quetta and Kashmir. Konkani Mussalmans who originally belonged to the districts of Kolaba and Ratnagiri are also to be found among the engine-room crew. The saloon department is completely manned by Christians coming from Goa, which is a Portuguese territory on the West Coast, and from South Kanara in Madras Presidency. These people took to seafaring service about 125 years ago. As steamships came into existence and passenger trade developed, the usefulness of these people was recognised as efficient butlers, cooks and waiters.

It is thus clear that maritime labour in Bombay is as cosmopolitan as the Bombay City itself. It may be of special interest to note that among the seamen who were admitted to the Indian Sailors' Home in Bombay during the year 1938, were Malabaris, Pathans, Punjabis, Upper Indians, Bengalis, Africans, Arabs, Goans and South Kanarans, in addition to those who belonged to Bombay Presidency.

3. HOW THE CREW WORKS

An idea of how the crew actually works on board ship is necessary in order to have a better appreciation of working conditions of different categories of seamen. The crew of a ship is ordinarily divided into three departments, namely, (1) the Deck Department, (2) the Engine-room Department, and (3) the Saloon Department.

Deck Department

The Master of the ship is responsible for the navigation, safety and discipline of the ship and for the transaction of the ship's business and also for the observance of the laws and regulations to which the ship is subject for the time being. *The Chief Officer or First Mate*, in addition to keeping watch, is responsible for the general upkeep of the ship excluding the engine-room and the stokehold. He is also in direct charge of all matters relating to the carrying and stowage of cargo. *The Second Mate* keeps watch, assists the Master in navigation and assists the Chief Officer in the discharge and stowage of cargo. *The Third Mate* keeps watch, relieves the second mate for lunch, and the first mate for dinner. In ports he assists the Chief Officer. *The Apprentices* carry out such duties as may be allotted to them by the Master and the Chief Officer. *The Clerks* do the clerical duties of the ship. *The Wireless Operators* do the work of receipt and dispatch of messages and maintain the wireless apparatus. *The Carpenter* takes soundings

of holds and bilges and fresh water compartments at regular intervals; is in charge of the stock of fresh water; superintends the cleaning of the fresh water compartments; battens down the hatchways; attends to carpentry repairs; works the windlass and anchor gear; overhauls anchor and cable shackles and superintends cable overhaul while the vessel is in dry dock; oils steering gears and oils and greases davits and boat hoisting gear; opens and closes cargo ports. *The Serang* (boatman) is in charge of the Lascar deck crew and is the connecting link between the Chief Officer and the Lascar seamen. *Tindals* are assistants to the Serang in the supervision of the Lascar seamen. *Sukhanies* or quartermasters steer the vessel under the orders of the Master and officers. They take and attend to soundings by the hand lead and assist at soundings by the patent sounding machine. They clean bridge brass work and keep the chart room clean and tidy. They attend to minor repairs to canvas work and flags, and make various articles of canvas work. They also read the patent log; oil and reset the patent log. They strike the ship's bell and call the watch and crew as required. While in port, they keep watch at the gangways *The Cassab* is in charge of deck stores, oils, paints, tools, and cleaning materials. He keeps the vessel's lamps cleaned and in order; keeps chipping hammers and scaling tools sharpened; and mixes paints for use. *The Winchman* keeps the windlass and cargo winches clean and oils

them; greases and changes the cargo runners; drives the windlass and a cargo winch; assists in general deck duties. *The Bhandari* cooks the crew's food. *The Topas* removes all filth and dirt which the crew will not touch; cleans out water closets, latrines, etc. *Lascars'* (Indian seamen) ordinary work consists of cleaning and washing decks; cleaning, chipping, scaling and painting of ship in and out: rigging and sending cargo derricks up and down, removing and shipping the ship's hatches and beams; shipping and unshipping cargo gangways; driving winches as required; cleaning holds and bilges, rigging and unrigging awnings; tending ship's lines when docking and undocking; mooring boats; cleaning and keeping boats in order: assisting with hand lead and patent sounding machine: look-out duty; and numerous other odd jobs in connection with ship and cargo.

Engine-room Department

The Chief Engineer is in full charge of the engine-room department with full authority over the engineers and crew of his department. *The Second Engineer* keeps watch. In addition, he exercises general supervision over the work of the engine-room department, maintains rough log books for submission to the Chief Engineer, and is responsible for the issue of the engine-room stores; *The Third Engineer* keeps watch, and attends to the overhaul of the auxiliary

machinery when and as required. *The Fourth Engineer* keeps watch, and assists in the overhaul of the auxiliary machinery. *The Fifth Engineer* keeps no watch. He is employed on general work in the engine-room. *The Engine-room Serang* keeps watch along with the second engineer; supervises the work of the firemen and is held responsible for maintaining steam and for the consumption of coal. *Engine-room Tindals* keep watch along with the third and fourth engineers. Their duties are similar to those of the Serang. They are subordinate to the Serang. *The Cassab* has charge of engine-room stores and tools, keeps the lamps clean and ready for use; and cleans brass work. *The Donkeyman* attends to the donkey boiler. He also carries out miscellaneous duties in the engine-room and sometimes works as a greaser. *Greasers* oil and grease the machinery. *Firemen* feed the furnaces with coal, clean the fires when necessary, and dispose of the ashes. *Coal Trimmers* trim the coal; keep the stokehold supplied with the requisite coal for feeding the furnaces: and attend to the cooling, collecting and dumping overboard of ashes from the stokehold. They may also be employed on chipping and scaling and at other odd jobs. *The Bhandari* cooks the meal of the crew.

Saloon Department

The Butler supervises the work of the saloon crew; attends to the intake and issue of saloon stores;

looks after the ship's plate, cutlery, glass, etc., and is in general charge of the saloon. *The Pantryman* is in charge of the pantry. *Cooks and Bakers* are in charge of cooking and baking. *The Butcher* is in charge of the vessel's meat and poultry supplies. *General Servants* are employed in attendance on officers and passengers.

CHAPTER II

RECRUITMENT

1. EXISTING METHOD

One of the most important problems concerning seamen all over the world is the method of their recruitment. In so far as India is concerned, it may at once be said that there are no satisfactory arrangements for the engagement of seamen. The present system, which has been in force for more than seventy years, has led to grave abuses. But before going into the defects of this system, it would be better to describe the method itself in some detail.

Under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, every seaman has to sign articles before he is actually engaged. Articles are of two kinds: six months articles which are used for ships that are not going west of Suez, and twelve months articles which are normal for ships going to the United Kingdom, America and other foreign countries. Thus every seamen employed is discharged at least once a year. It is this factor that introduces special features into the system of recruitment of maritime labour. Another special feature of the system is that recruitment of seamen is governed by the Merchant Shipping Act, and that no person is permitted to supply seamen unless he is authorised to do so under the Act.

Government Shipping Offices working under the

control and guidance of Shipping Masters are maintained at Bombay and Calcutta. The general business of Shipping Masters is to superintend and facilitate the engagement and discharge of seamen, and to provide means for securing the presence of the engaged seamen on board at the proper time. The Shipping Masters are also entitled to supply seamen. Under the provisions of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, this power of supplying seamen is further extended to the owner or master or mate of the ship, or a *bonâ fide* servant of the owner, or a person holding a special licence. None excepting these can do the business of recruiting seamen. The persons holding the licence under the Act are known as licensed shipping brokers. At present there is only one firm of licensed brokers at Bombay (Chichgar & Co.). In Calcutta the licensing system has been abolished, in accordance with the recommendations of the Clow Committee, 1922. Even in Bombay the powers of the brokers have been curtailed recently. They are no longer given a voice in the selection of higher ratings like serangs and butlers, as was the case formerly; and it is no longer customary for them to supply the lower ratings, except where vacancies occur immediately prior to a vessel's departure. The other function of the brokers is to advance a month's wages to the seaman after he is engaged and before he actually sails, for which they receive a fixed commission from the shipping companies.

The most important agency for supply of seamen

is the various recruiting agents of the shipping companies, who are treated as the *bonâ fide* paid servants of these companies. When a ship requires crew, the company's recruiting agents or the shipping office is informed of its requirements by the captain of the ship. The agents then send for serangs and butlers, who are the heads of Indian crews, and recruit them. All the serangs and butlers thus collected at the Shipping Office are mustered in the presence of the Shipping Master, and a selection is made amongst them by the captain of the ship or his representative. The selected serang (or butler in the case of the saloon crew) then collects his own crew according to his own selection and produces his men before the ship's captain or officer. The captain or the officer concerned usually approves of the men produced by the serang or butler unless there is any sound reason for rejecting any of them. This selection is generally made two or three days before the ship sails and the crew is signed on. This signing on must, under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, take place in the presence of the Shipping Master. With regard to the engagement of the saloon crew on the P. and O. and B. I. ships at the Bombay port, the system is a little different. The companies have a regular office instead of individual recuriting agents for recruiting saloon men and keeping them ready for being signed on. The men present themselves at the office every week and a selection is made by the persons in charge of the office. This is how Indian seamen are recruited.

It is clear that a system of recruitment as the one described above allows ample scope for bribery and corruption. The company's recruiting agent plays the most important part in it. It is he who gives serangs and butlers information of ships requiring crews, and recruits them. He can also make it difficult for a serang or butler to keep his crew. The men can be bribed or intimidated into deserting if the serang or butler falls out of his favour. Thus the recruiting agent is the channel of employment for serangs and butlers, who in their turn virtually select their own crews. As the supply of serangs and butlers exceeds the demand both at Bombay and Calcutta, it is but natural that they should attempt to turn the scales in their favour by offering bribes to those through whom they can secure employment. Thus the companies' agents are bribed by serangs and butlers who in their turn demand bribes from seamen forming the crew. As there is a big surplus of seamen, the serang or butler can pick and choose only those who offer him a bribe. Similarly, experience has shown that bribery and corruption can be attendant features of even more direct system of recruitment, as when the saloon men are recruited by the recruiting offices of some shipping companies.

Often, the engine-room serangs call privately on the engineers on ships, and the man who makes the best bargain with them gets the promise of a job. No

doubt the serangs are mustered before the Shipping Master and the engineers go through the formality of inspecting certificates and testimonials to keep up the appearance of a genuine selection. The choice, however, usually falls upon the man with whom they have previously come to an agreement.

The whole system is so defective and full of abuses that bribery, on an extensive scale, has become its regular feature. As a result of much agitation by seamen's representatives, the Government of India appointed in 1921 a Committee known as the Seamen's Recruitment Committee (or the Clow Committee from the name of its chairman) to conduct an enquiry into the alleged corrupt practices. The Committee is understood to have elicited some remarkable facts. It came to the conclusion that while bribery was serious among the seamen in Bombay, it took the form of systematised extortion in Calcutta. Taking Bombay first, it is understood that the Committee found that among the deck crews each seaman paid from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 to the serang. In the engine-room department, the serang received from the men from Rs. 300 to Rs 500 according to the size of the crew. Further, junior engineer officers on ships were also found occassionally taking bribes. Coming to Calcutta, it was revealed that bribery was more serious in this port than in Bombay. It was found that the men forming the crew paid bribes to their serang according to a graduated scale. Before going on board each man had to settle with the

serang the amount he was to receive as pay while on ship, and the difference between that and the company's pay was known as the 'increase.' This increase went to the serang as his bribe. Thus, in one case where the *lascar's* rate of wages was Rs. 22, the serang had one man on Rs. 21, two on Rs. 20, three on Rs. 17, three on Rs. 16, one on Rs. 15, three on Rs 14, one on Rs. 13, and one on Rs. 12, giving a total monthly increase of Rs. 88 out of a total pay bill (for the company) of Rs. 330. This means that more than 26 per cent. of the wages were paid as bribes on an average.

This state of affairs was highly unsatisfactory, and the Committee recommended a fresh system of recruitment to be brought into force at the earliest opportunity by setting up a public employment bureau in each port as contemplated in the Draft Convention adopted by the Genoa Labour Conference in 1920. They also suggested that bribery, whether direct or indirect, should be regarded as a serious offence and be made punishable with a maximum of two years' rigorous imprisonment. Though more than seventeen years have since elapsed, the recommendations of the Committee have not yet been given full effect to, the result being that bribery has all along continued on nearly the same extensive scale. The seamen's representatives who appeared before the Royal Commission in 1930 declared that bribery was as prevalent then as when the Clow Committee made its report.[1]

[1] *R. C. L. I., Report*, p. 177

The evil of bribery is so ingrained in the system of recruitment of Indian seamen since the introduction of the system some seventy years ago, that even the Royal Commission grew pessimistic regarding the possibilities of its complete elimination and went to the length of remarking that so long as unemployment remained, the temptation to offer a bribe was not likely to be diminished.[2] But there can be no room for such pessimism, if only the State takes the necessary action in the matter. If the Government of India had given effect to the recommendations of the Clow Committee, bribery would have been long banished from the ports of Bombay and Calcutta or at least substantially reduced. But throughout the policy of the Government has been not to do anything which the powerful British shipping companies declared to be impracticable.

2. ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT BOARD SYSTEM

Only the establishment of an employment bureau in each port as contemplated by the Genoa Conference and as recommended by the Clow Committee would save Indian seamen from paying bribes. Under the Convention, each State ratifying the convention is to organise and maintain an efficient and adequate system of public employment for seamen free of charge. Such system should be organised and maintained either by representative associations of shipowners and seamen jointly under the control of a central authority or, in

[2] *Ibid.*

the absence of such joint action, by the State itself. The work of the employment office should be administered by persons having practical maritime experience. Whether the first alternative of setting up the agency with the help of workers' and employers' organisations or the second of setting it up independently of them by the State is adopted, committees consisting of equal number of representatives of shipowners and seamen should be constituted, under Article five of the Convention, to advise on all matters concerning the work of the bureau.

Of the two methods thus suggested in the Convention, the first of recruiting seamen through a Joint Board of representatives of seamen and shipowners is the better one in every respect, especially from the point of view of eliminating bribery. This was also the considered opinion of the Clow Committee. How the establishment of a Joint Maritime Board alone can check bribery, may now be explained. The Joint Board should keep a general register of all seamen in each port and classify the list according to various categories of seamen. The names in the register under each category should be arranged according to the last date of discharge of each seaman, the man discharged first being placed at the top of the list. On the appointed date of the embarkation of the crew, seamen of all categories who desire to be engaged should be asked to present themselves at the office of the Joint Board; and they should be called in the order

in which their names appear on the rolls and be presented to the captain or his representative. The captain should generally accept the men thus presented, but he may have the right of rejecting any of them, only if he shows any good reason which should be verified by the Joint Board. Similar right of not accepting an engagement on a particular ship should be granted to seamen. With a view to distributing equitably the available volume of employment amongst all seamen of the port, the Joint Board can introduce a rule that men should be discharged after a prescribed period of continuous service and be re-employed according to each man's rotation. Under this method there will be no scope for bribery or corruption, as every seaman in the ordinary course will have to be engaged at regular intervals. If there would be any case of either favouritism or victimisation, it could be immediately brought to the notice of the seamen's representatives sitting on the Joint Board, who would make an enquiry into the matter. This procedure would serve as a proper check on all corrupt practices.

Government Shipping Offices, however efficient and well equipped they may be in their own way, are absolutely incapable of checking bribery unless the Shipping Master is assisted by a Joint Board consisting of representatives of shipowners and seamen. This has been the experience in Indian ports for many years. The very fact that the existence of Shipping Offices in India could not reduce bribery proves the truth of our

statement. It is for this reason that practically all the important maritime countries of the world have established Joint Boards for the purpose of controlling the recruitment of seamen. That these countries have eminently succeeded in their new experiment is generally admitted. To cite only a few examples. In the United Kingdom a system was set up in 1918 for the supply of seamen under the joint control of the shipowners' association and the seamen's unions. Speaking about the success of the system during the very first year of its existence, the I. L. O. Report authoritatively states: "Both seamen and shipowners were, however, completely satisfied with the results obtained by the joint-supply arrangement of the National Maritime Board."[3] A system very similar to that which exists in Great Britain is carried on in Norway "with complete success," as the I. L. O. Report puts it.[4] The Joint Board system is also adopted in France, Italy, Sweden and Japan among other countries. As many as 24 nations have ratified the Genoa Convention. But India has remained unmoved for the last eighteen years in spite of the fact that she occupies the fourth place in the world in regard to the number of seamen. The Government of India should at least now realise the great injustice they have been doing to thousands of seamen during the last two decades, and immediately set up Joint Maritime Boards in each port.

[3] *Report II, Seamen's Conference*, Genoa, June 1920, p. 9.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

It is true that under the Convention the entire responsibility for establishing the agencies lies with the central Government. This does not and should not, however, mean that the provincial Governments of Bombay and Bengal have no obligations to discharge in the matter. As the recruiting ports are under their jurisdiction and as the seamen who are being recruited at these ports form a considerable proportion of each city's population, it is equally the duty of the provincial Governments to take an active interest in the method of engagement of seamen and to bring pressure on the central Government. Moreover, under the new Government of India Act, provincial Governments possess the power to enact legislation regulating conditions of labour in provinces. If the central Government make any further delay in ratifying the Genoa Convention, the Governments of Bengal and Bombay should take up the question in their own hands and set up Joint Boards in their respective ports. Mention may be made, in this connection, of the fact that the Government of Bombay, in their statement on labour policy issued in August 1937, have committed themselves to the establishment of employment exchanges in important industrial centres. But so far nothing has been done. The Government should make an immediate beginning in this direction by first setting up the machinery in shipping industry, as it is in this industry that the workers are the worst victims of bribery.

CHAPTER III

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

1. THE EXTENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

According to the information supplied by the Department of Commerce of the Government of India to the International Labour Office, the number of Indian seamen in employment in 1935 was 59,000 and that of the unemployed 1,13,000.[1] Thus roughly speaking, there were two unemployed seamen for one in employment. In other words, nearly 66 per cent. of maritime labour in India were out of work. Seamen's organisations in Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi estimated that the number of unemployed seamen is much higher than the above figure. According to them, the total number of Indian seamen is in the neighbourhood of 2,35,000, they being distributed as follows according to ports to which they belong:

Calcutta	1,40,000
Bombay	70,000
Karachi	25,000
Total	2,35,000

It may be pointed out here that the estimate that the total number of seamen at Calcutta is about 1,40,000 was admitted as correct by the Shipping Master, Calcutta, in his oral evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour in India.[2] Thus, according to the

[1] *Maritime Statistical Handbook*, p. 125.

[2] *R. C. L. I., Evidence*, Vol. V, Pt. 2, p. 260.

estimates made by seamen's organisations, the number of unemployed seamen exceeds the Government of India figure by 63,000. In case we rely on non-official figures, the percentage of unemployed seamen to their total number is 75 instead of 66 which is based on official figures as shown above. Even assuming that the official figures are more reliable, there is no denying the fact that unemployment among Indian seamen is very acute and alarming. There is no maritime country in the world where unemployment among seamen is as serious as in India. The problem becomes all the more serious when we take into consideration the duration of unemployment of a very large proportion of seamen, along with the total number of the unemployed. Regarding the duration of unemployment, we have sufficient evidence to show that a considerable number of seamen go without jobs for years together.

Bombay: I have known many seamen in Bombay without employment for periods ranging between four and eight years. In the course of an enquiry conducted by the Social Service League, Bombay, in 1927, it was found that there were many seamen who were unable to secure jobs for a number of years. The report cites an instance of an engine-room tindal who was without employment for 17 years and 6 months, having begun seaman's life some 30 years back.[3] That the period of continuous unemployment is very long in certain cases is further evidenced by the figures contain-

[3] P. G. Kanekar, *Seamen in Bombay*, pp. 16–17.

ed in the Annual Reports of the Indian Sailors' Home Society, Bombay. Among the seamen admitted to the Home during the five years' period commencing from 1932, as many as 380 seamen were those who were without service for periods extending over more than three years Of these 380 persons, 31 or nearly 9 per cent. were unemployed for a period over five years. Though these figures are not exhaustive, they can be taken as sufficiently indicative of the fact that the duration of unemployment among the seamen of Bombay is very trying. It must also be noted that these figures err on the side of moderation, because a large proportion of unemployed seamen, especially those who remain out of work for long, stay in their native villages and not in Bombay, knowing that they would not be able to secure jobs in Bombay should they go over there. If they have to remain unemployed, it is better for them to stay in their villages than in Bombay where the cost of living is higher. Hence it can be said that the duration of unemployment is much longer than what it seems to be from the statistics contained in the reports of the Indian Sailors' Home Society. What is to be noted further is the fact that unemployment among the Bombay seamen has been on the increase ever since the Great War. The Shipping Master, Bombay, giving evidence before the Royal Commission, admitted that unemployment was greater in 1929 than in 1922.[4] The change has been for the worse since 1929. It was calculated in 1929

[4] *R. C. L. I.*, *Evidence*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 213.

of the 70,000 seamen in Bombay, about one-third or 23,000 were on ships at a time.[5] To-day according to the Shipping Master, this number has fallen to about 17,000.

Calcutta: In Calcutta the position is equally unsatisfactory. It was calculated in 1929 that out of 1,40,000 seamen in Calcutta, only about 53,000 could find employment at a time.[6] The position appears to have become worse since then, in view of the fact that the number of those who can find work at a time has fallen from 53,000 to about 42,000. We arrive at this estimate by deducting the figure of 17,000, which represents the number of seamen recruited in Bombay, from the total of 59,000 representing all Indian seamen who are at work. This means that nearly a lakh of Bengali seamen are without employment at a time. With regard to the duration of unemployment in Calcutta, many are out of work continuously for long periods, in some cases the period extending over eight or nine years.[7] In this respect, Calcutta seamen are in as bad a plight as their Bombay comrades.

Karachi: Coming to Karachi, we find that the problem af unemployment is still more serious there, though the total number of seamen in that port is comparatively small. The position in Karachi is rather peculiar inasmuch as the practice of recruiting full crews in that port has been abandoned since 1926. As

5 *Ibid*, pp. 222-23.
6 *Ibid.*, Vol. V, Pt. 2 p. 80.
7 *Ibid.*, Vol. V, Pt. 2, p. 267.

the result of the war, there was a great demand for seamen's labour, which led to a large increase in their supply; and many persons took to seafaring life. After the termination of the war the demand fell rapidly, with the result that Karachi ceased to be a principal recruiting port. It is stated that only about 300 men on an average are being recruited at Karachi annually, the total number of seamen available for work being nearly 25,000.[8]

2. INDEBTEDNESS

It is obvious that unemployment leads to indebtedness. That there is a very close relationship between the extent of unemployment and the degree of indebtedness can best be illustrated by citing the example of Indian seamen. It can be shown that Indian seamen as a class are perhaps the most heavily indebted people among the industrial population of this country, because unemployment is most acute in shipping industry. This has been sufficiently admitted by the Royal Commission on Labour in India when they stated: "In many branches of Indian industry, poverty is aggravated by the retention of far more workers than are required. One of the worst examples is shipping."[9]

Calcutta: According to enquiries carried out by the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Bengal, some years ago, it was found that the seamen of Bengal

[8] *Ibid*, Vol. I, Part. 2, p. 41.
[9] *R. C. L. I.*, *Report*, p. 210.

as a class were very heavily indebted. It was stated that the percentage of men in debt was 75 in the saloon department, 85 in the deck department and 95 in the engine-room department,[10] whereas the corresponding percentage among the jute workers of Calcutta was only 10.[11] The average amount of debt which a seaman owed to his creditors was Rs. 25 in the deck department, Rs. 30 in the engine-room department and Rs. 35 in the saloon department, whereas in individual cases it ranged from Rs. 15 to Rs. 700 among the deck crew, from Rs. 20 to Rs. 1,000 among engine crew and from Rs. 25 to Rs. 1,000 among the saloon workers. It is important to note that the average debt per head among jute workers in Calcutta was Rs. 18.9 whereas it ranged from Rs. 25 to Rs. 35 in the case of seamen.[12]

With regard to the rate of interest also, seamen are the worst sufferers. While the average rate of interest paid by Calcutta seamen varied from 75 to 150 per cent.,[13] it was 78 per cent. on an average in the case of jute workers, according to the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour.[14] That in many cases the rate of interest charged to seamen is as high as 150 per cent. is further corroborated by the Marine Superintendent of the British India Steam Navigation Company.[15] Explaining the cause of indebtedness

10 *Ibid.*, *Evidence*, Vol. V; Part I, p. 50.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 269.
12 *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.
13 *R. C. L. I.*, *Evidence*. Vol. V, Part I, p. 50.
14 *Ibid.*, *Report*, p. 225.
15 *Ibid.*, *Evidence*, Vol. V, Part I, p. 365.

among the seamen of Bengal, the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Bengal, stated that it was mainly due to the fact that there was no permanency of appointment.[16]

Bombay: Though we have no sufficient statistics to judge the exact extent of indebtedness of seamen in Bombay, we are fortunate to possess a few facts as revealed in the course of an investigation conducted by the Social Service League in 1927. The investigator cites the case of a seaman about 30 years old with a wife and three children, who had been without employment for two years. Before this he had certain ornaments belonging to his wife and some gold in the form of rings on his person, besides a watch with a gold chain, and good clothes, which he had to part with. His debts amounted to Rs. 500 and he had to pay interest at the rate of 72 to 108 per cent.[17] And this is not an isolated case.

According to the Report on an Enquiry into Working Class Family Budgets in Bomby city published by the Bombay Labour Office in 1935, about 75 per cent. of the industrial workers living in Bombay were in debt.[18] If this is the state of things with regard to workers in general, the extent of indebtedness must be still greater in the case of seamen due to the fact

16 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
17 P. G. Kanekar, op cit., p. 8.
18 *Report on An Enqairy into Working Class Family Budgets in Bombay City*, 1935, p. 30.

that unemployment is most severe among them. This conclusion becomes irresistible when statistics show that the main cause of indebtedness of a working class family is unemployment. This is made clear in the following table taken from the Labour Office Report referred to above:

Causes of Indebtedness[19]

Causes	Percentage of families to total number of families in debt.
Unemployment	26.67
Marriages	22.75
Sickness	12.46
Ordinary wants	9.71
House-building or repairs	4.57
Arrears to shop-keepers	8.04
Old outstanding debts	2.25
Funerals	3.19
Strikes	2.10
Other causes	8.26
Total	100.00

The Shipping Master, Bombay, once said that seamen in Bombay could not get heavily into debt, as professional moneylenders in Bombay did not lend money to seamen on account of their frequent absences and because their homes were not in Bombay.[20] In the first place, it is not correct that professional money-lenders do not lend money to seamen. There are cases

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[20] *R. C. L. I.*, *Evidence*, Vol. I, Part, I, p. 182.

wherein seamen owe heavy debts either to Marwaris or Pathans or to both who are professional money-lenders. Secondly, seamen in Bombay borrow money from serangs who are worse than professional money-lenders. Again, there are serangs who keep men with them and feed them till they get jobs. Thus the serangs are really the money-lenders of the crew. There are also many instances wherein serangs are indebted to some money-lender, while the men in their turn are indebted to serangs. Borrowing money through the serang is worse than being directly indebted to a Marwari, because indirect borrowing means the payment of interest at a higher rate. Secondly, if the men are indebted to the serang, they are under his control on account of their indebtedness. Thirdly, the serang naturally prefers his own debtor for the purpose of employment. Thus, seamen cannot procure jobs unless they get hold of a serang and become indebted to him. In this way, the system encourages men to be in debt and creates in them an idea of slavery.

3. REMEDIES FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

Though the problem of unemployment among Indian seamen cannot be completely solved as long as the supply of seaman exceeds the demand, it is possible to mitigate some of the evils of unemployment by rationalising the methods of recruitment and by adopting other remedies. It must be stated at the very outset that unemployment

among seamen is intensified by the fact that they belong to a specialised occupation and are practically debarred from obtaining employment on shore. They are seamen by habit and it is not easy for them to take to any other profession. It is not true to say that Indian seamen are essentially agriculturists and can earn their livelihood by cultivating land when unemployed. As admitted by the Shipping Master, Calcutta, "The *lascar* goes to the sea because he is fond of the sea and takes to the sea naturally;"[21] and the life history of several *lascar* families shows that this liking for the sea has been handed down from father to son, as there is now a well-established class of people who look to maritime employment exclusively as their occupation.

Amongst the various remedies that may be adopted to reduce unemployment or to mitigate its severity, the following may be suggested:

Stopping of Fresh Recruits: The most obvious method is the stopping of fresh recruitment for a limited period without reducing the total number below the reasonable requirements of the industry. But, as observed by the Royal Commission, the cessation of all fresh recruitment for a long period would be unwise.[22] For apart from the difficulty of resisting the reasonable claims of seamen, whose families have

21 *Ibid.*, Vol. V, Part 2, p. 263.
22 *Ibid.*, *Report*, p. 179.

for generations followed seafaring, to secure the enrolment of their sons, the result might be to break the valuable connections which the industy maintains with various recruiting areas in India. After examining this question carefully, the Whitley Commission recommended that no fresh continuous discharge certificates should be issued for twelve months, unless the Shipping Master is satisfied that the newcomers are actually required for employment and that suitable men are not already available. They also recommended that there should be, after a suitable break, a further period of 12 months in which fresh recruitment is again restricted.[23] The Government of India recently implemented this recommendation with certain reservations. They have decided that no fresh continuous discharge certificates should be issued unless the Shipping Master is satisfied that new recruits are required for employment and that suitable men are not already available. An exception has been made in the case of minor relatives of senior ratings taken on voyages to commence their sea career. The Government further felt that the period during which the restriction should be maintained must depend on the measure of success achieved in reducing unemployment, and in order to enable them to decide whether a stage has been reached when a relaxation of the restriction may be permitted, they desired that an annual report should be submitted

23 *Ibid.*

to them by the District Principal Officers, giving an appreciation of the position in regard to unemployment among seamen, indicating how far the methods adopted have been effective in checking fresh recruitment, and containing an expression of opinion as to whether the position had sufficiently improved to make it desirable that fresh recruitment should be regulated in accordance with the recommendation of the Commission.[24]

As we are not in possession of the annual reports submitted by the District Principal Officers, we do not know how far the position has improved. But it is rather unfortunate that, in view of the severe unemployment among seamen, the Government of India have not fully implemented the recommendations of the Royal Commission. In fact, what they have accepted and given effect to is so little that there will be no real improvement in the situation. Nothing less than the stopping of new recruitment for a limited period will make the position better. It is, therefore, neccessary that effective steps should be taken in that direction without delay. Since the Whitley Commission reported in 1931, unemployment has been on the increase, as we have shown elsewhere.

Why the Government of India have not fully implemented the recommendations of the Royal Commis-

[24] *Fourth Report showing the action taken by the Central and Provincial Governments on the Recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Labour in India* p. 52.

sion, we do not know. They perhaps think that stopping new recruitment for a time would be undesirable in the interest of shipowners. In this connection, it is of interest to note the objection raised by the Shipping Master, Calcutta, to stop the recruitment of new seamen for a year. He contended that when a coal-trimmer has made one or two voyages he does not want to go to sea again unless he can go as a fireman, the result being that one must continually recruit these lower ratings, otherwise ships would be held up for want of coal-trimmers.[25] There is some point in what the Shipping Master maintained. But this difficulty can be easily got over by raising the wages of coal-trimmers which are very low, and secondly by paying them an increment in their wages according to the length of service each coal-trimmer puts in. Under the existing conditions of pay, new recruits have become necessary because the rates of wages of coal-trimmers are extremely low and also because there is no system of annual increments. It is, therefore, necessary that the shipping companies should be compelled by the Government of India to raise the lowest rates and to recognise the principle of annual increment in wages.

It is noteworthy that the method of stopping new recruitment as a remedy for unemployment among seamen has been adopted in some countries in recent years. In *Germany* at the suggestion of the representatives of

25 *R, C. L. I., Evidence*, Vol. V, Part 2, p. 267.

the seamen's employment exchanges applicants without previous sea experience are not permitted to register.[26] Similarly, in *Italy* the maritime registers have been closed, and have only been reopened to allow the normal working of the system of naval recruitment.[27] The seamen's organisations in *Portugal* have suggested similar measures for being adopted.[28]

Retirement of Old Seamen: Unemployment among seamen can also be reduced to some extent by prohibiting the engagement of seamen over certain age. It may be suggested that all seamen on reaching fifty-five years of age (fifty for engine-room staff) should be compulsorily retired and must be given pensions by shipowners. Seamen in some European countries acquire pension rights on the attainment of a fixed age and according to the length of service. Pensions are granted to seamen in France, Italy, Belgium and Greece.[29] It lies with the Government to persuade the shipping companies to pay pensions to their employees, especially when the British companies, who employ nearly 50,000 Indian seamen, are making enormous profits.[30] If a seaman serves with more than one employer, each employer should be made to contribute towards the pension fund in proportion to the

26 *I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1931, p. 376.
27 *Ibid.*
28 *Ibid.*
29 *Ibid.*, p. 377; 1932, p. 342.
30 See the Chapter on Wages.

length of service which the man has put in with that particular employer.

Exclusion of Unemployed Men : As one of the remedies for reducing unemployment, the Royal Commission recommended that all seamen who have not been in employment for three years should be excluded from the register.[31] Though the Government of India have not fully implemented this recommendation, they have left instructions to Shipping Masters that they should exert their influence in the direction of discouraging the employment of seamen with no entries in their continuous discharge certificates for three or more years. This step is certainly causing undue hardship to those men who, through no fault of their own but owing to the existing system, have been out of employment for three or more years. As Secretary of the Seamen's Union, Bombay, I have known many cases wherein seamen could not secure jobs for years together because they could not pay heavy bribes. The earlier the instructions issued to Shipping Masters are withdrawn, the better for all concerned.

Employment in Rotation: The seamen's organizations in India have been demanding that seamen should be engaged in rotation in order to secure to them an equal distribution of the available volume of employment. They hold that this system will effectively deal with the problem of unemployment, and is necessary in the

31 *R. C. L. I., Report*, pp. 179-180.

interest of the health of the seamen who, after a strenuous voyage, desire a respite on the home-shore to be once more in the midst of their families or relatives, and can very well afford a holiday. They contend that there are certain ranks of seamen who renew their agreements after every voyage, and in this way continue their service sometimes for years together without giving any chance to a seaman of the same category to step into his shoes. For these reasons, it has been urged that the guiding principle in the engagement of seamen should be that no agreement should be allowed to spread over a period of more than twelve months.

The Royal Commission, however, did not accept the principle of rotation, as they felt that it was not in the true interests of the men, especially when the supply of seamen far exceeded the demand for them. "A rigid system of rotation," the Commission observed, "combined with the limitation of period of continuous employment, would mean that no seaman could hope to be employed for more than one year out of every three or four. Such a policy would make every seaman an inefficient and starved worker. It would also react unfairly on those who, by their industry and diligence, would otherwise secure reasonably continuous employment."[32]

In the first place, by stopping new recruitment for a time and by compulsorily retiring old men, it would be

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

quite possible to reduce the number of seamen to such figures as would enable them to be employed for a year out of every eighteen months or so, instead of every three or four years as the Royal Commission calculated. That the stopping of new recruitment for a while would greatly reduce the number of seamen is evident from the fact that the Shipping Master at Calcutta registered as many as 74,000 new seamen in ten years, the annual average being a little over 7,000.[33] That all these new recruits were not really needed can be seen from the fact that only 11,700 of them could secure employment.[34] If we assume that the reduction thus effected would enable every seaman to secure employment for a year out of every eighteen months or so, the fear expressed by the Royal Commission that the policy of employment in rotation would make every seaman an inefficient and starved worker falls to the ground. A seaman may lose his efficiency only if he is out of employment for a sufficiently long period, say, four or five years. Mention may be made here of the fact that the system of rotation was actually followed in the past by the P. & O. Company with regard to the saloon crew in Bombay port and that it gave satisfactory results.[35] The system, however, has not been properly adhered to in recent years. As a result of agitation carried on by the Seamen's Union, Bombay, for more than four months begin-

33 *R. C. L. I., Evidence*, Vol. V, Part II, p. 260.
34 *Ibid.*
35 *Ibid*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 545.

ning from December 1938, and as a result of stopping crews on ships, the P. and O. and other shipping companies have been forced to concede the Union's demand for employing men in rotation. A detailed account of this agitation is given in the Chapter on Industrial Relations.

The fact that the system of rotation has been adopted in a number of countries would clearly indicate that the system is considered desirable in the real interest of seamen. The system was put into practice by the wireless operators' organisations in *Belgium* and *Great Britain* in 1931, resulting in a rotation ensuring from six to nine months' employment in a year for each member of the organisation.[36] Similarly, in *Italy* the Seamen's Federation organised a system for employing seamen in rotation on board the ships belonging to its co-operative shipping undertakings. As the system guaranteed stability of employment for nearly nine months in a year, it was further extended in 1932, in agreement with the shipowners' organisation, to the whole Italian merchant fleet. The Italian scheme provides that only seamen with more than one year's sea service can be discharged, and that substitutes must be engaged from those at the top of the employment exchange registration lists. It is clearly stated that the working of the scheme, which applied to 4,000 seamen, gave "good

[36] The I. L. O. Year-Book, 1931, p. 377.

results."[37] In *Chile*, a rotation scheme was established by shipowners and seamen in agreement in 1932, and was reported to have benefitted 1,200 unemployed seamen.[38] Similar schemes were instituted by certain shipping companies in the United States,[39] whereas seamen's organisations in *Australia* and *New Zealand* are stated to have expressed themselves as favourable to a policy of rotation.[40] The system is also introduced in *Greece*, which provides that all unemployed seamen should be registered in grades corresponding to the length of time out of employment, and that two-thirds of the crew of all passenger ships must consist of seamen who have been out of employment for over six months.[41]

All these schemes aim at alleviating unemployment by prescribing that seamen should be employed in rotation, so that, instead of a certain number of them being in continuous employment, there should be a larger number employed, though not continuously. When such a system is considered good in the interest of seamen in many countries, why should it not be adopted in India?

4. EMPLOYMENT OF INDIAN SEAMEN ON BRITISH SHIPS

A very large majority of Indian seamen are

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 377-78; 1932, p. 342.
38 *Ibid*, 1932, p. 343.
39 *Ibid.*
40 *Ibid*, 1931, p. 378.
41 *Ibid.*, 1932, p. 342.

employed on British ships. According to the latest available information, of the 59,000 Indian seamen who were at work in 1935, as many as 42,000 were employed on British ships. In recent years, a section of the British public has been demanding that Indian and other Asiatic seamen should not be employed on British ships so that more employment could be provided to their own nationals. In the year 1935 when the Bill for subsidising tramp steamers came up before the Houses of Parliament for discussion, the Parliamentary Labour Party opposed the payment of subsidies to shipowners because the Government in replying to the debate declined to give an undertaking to reduce unemployment among British seamen by excluding Indian and other Asiatic seamen from British ships. The spokesmen of the Labour Party stated that there were about 40,000 British seamen out of work, that it would be wrong at such a time to spend the tax-payers' money in paying subsidies to shipowners unless the payment resulted in reduction of employment among British seafarers and that if the desired reduction could not be brought about in the ordinary way, it should be effected by discharging Asiatic seamen from British-owned ships.[42] Fortunately, the Government did not accept the view held by the Labour Party, and Dr. Burgin, the Government spokesman, rightly declared that the vast majority of the *lascars* were British subjects

[42] See *House of Commons Debates*, Vol. 295, Cols, 1431–59.

entitled to British passports and to all the advantages of British citizenship to which any Hon. Member of the House of Parliament was entitled.

This attitude taken by the Parliamentary Labour Party is opposed to all recognised labour principles and the international solidarity of the working classes. As expressed by the National Trades Union Federation of India, "in view of the fact that India is a part of the British Commonwealth of Nations and also in view of the fact that British shipping companies enjoy virtual monopoly of trade in Indian waters and also enjoy the patronage of the Government of India at the cost of this country, Indian seamen have the same right to employment on British-owned ships as that enjoyed by any other British subject." The N. T. U. F. further urged that the question of distribution of employment should be decided by negotiation between the interests concerned and appealed to the Government of India to intervene in the matter and protect the rights of Indian seamen.[43]

There is no foundation for the underlying assumption that British ships are constructed entirely from the resources of the people of Great Britain. The world dominance of British shipping was rendered possible and has since been maintained mainly through the fact of India and other Eastern countries being in the

[43] *Report of the 'Second Session of the National Trades Union Federation*, 1936, pp. 67-68.

British Empire and by denying to the people of these countries the opportunities to construct, own and run their own mercantile or even coastal shipping service. The presence of Indian seamen on British ships is but an inadequate compensation, if at all, for the loss which India sustains by the absence of a mercantile marine of her own. For these reasons, the Government of India should do everything in their power to see that Indian seamen, including Goan and other seamen of Portuguese India, get employment on British ships. This can be done by adopting a statutory system of quotas, there being a ratio of percentage of Indian seamen on all British ships.

5. INDIAN SEAMEN ON FOREIGN SHIPS

A considerable number of Indian seamen are also employed on ships belonging to other European nations, mainly on German and Dutch ships. In recent years, European organisations are showing a marked tendency to seek means of restricting the recruitment of Indian and other Asiatic seamen. For instance, in French ports *lascars* are only permitted to land if in possession of a certificate attesting that they would be engaged in a British port.[44] Similarly, a special committee on remedies for unemployment appointed by the Norwegian Government reported that the prohibition of Asiatic seamen on Norwegian ships would provide

[44] *The I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1931, p. 376.

work for an additional 1,500 to 2,000 Norwegian seamen.[45]

Again, the various seafarers' organisations in Europe have long been pre-occupied with the problem of the employment of Asiatic seamen on board European vessels. A joint conference of the International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association and the Seamen's Section of the International Transport Workers' Federation, which took place in March 1928, adopted a resolution for setting up a committee of enquiry into the working conditions of Asiatic seamen on board European ships. This Committee published a report in 1930 dealing with the various aspects of the problem. The conclusion reached by this report is that employment under existing conditions of non-European seamen should be opposed for the following reasons: (1) because they are entitled to be treated like other seafarers; (2) because it has not been shown that non-European crews are to be preferred, either from the standpoint of efficiency or safety; (3) because they hamper trade union action; (4) because they are used to debase wage and general working conditions of seamen as a whole. The Committee therefore proposed that seamen's organisations should take concerted action in order to ensure: (a) that national conditions applicable in the country to which the ship belongs should also apply to non-European seamen, whatever their

[45] *Ibid*, 1932, p. 342.

nationality, and that, in particular, the working conditions and the system of engagement and discharge of such crews should be the same as for European seamen; (b) that special supervision should be instituted, preferably by legislative means, to check and prevent extortion and abuse in the engagement and discharge of non-European seamen; (c) that the standard of ships' crews shall be improved by raising the level of proficiency, general education, and social outlook.[46]

It is thus evident that the employment of Asiatic seamen on European ships may be reduced or even prohibited unless the causes of complaints are removed. Apart from the national feeling to help one's own countrymen, it must be admitted that some of the above complaints made against the Asiatic seamen are perfectly justified. It is true to say that Asiatic seamen are used to debase wages and general working conditions. But the fault does not lie with the poor seamen. It is for the national Governments of those Asiatic countries whose seamen are employed on European ships to enact necessary legislation fixing decent wages for their nationals and making it a condition for their being employed on foreign ships. Again, it is for the Governments of these Asiatic countries to improve the standard of their seafarers by raising the level of proficiency and general education. Unless these things are done, there is a grave danger of Asiatic seamen being

[46] *I. L. O. Annual Review*, 1930, pp. 388-89.

excluded from European ships. What is more, bad conditions of labour in one part of the world are sure to bring down the general international standards of labour. Considering all these aspects of the question, the Governments of Asiatic nations should compel European shipowners to better the conditions of Asiatic seamen on their ships.

CHAPTER IV

HOURS OF WORK

1. THE PRESENT POSITION

One of the supreme objectives of labour is the shortening of hours of work, which is a social necessity. Real progress in this direction has been made in so far as workers on shore are concerned, and a 48-hour week is now the rule in a great many countries. Though the hours of work in industries in India have not been reduced to the same extent as in some European and American countries, the fact that there has been some progress must be admitted. Under the Indian Factories Act, 1934, hours of work are limited to 54 per week. Many enterprises have gone further. In all the dockyards and some of the larger engineering and railway workshops, a 48-hour week is in operation.

But in the case of seamen, the hours of labour are not yet regulated in India in spite of the fact that India is one of the principal countries of maritime importance in the world. It will be conceded on all hands that, just as the hours of work of labourers on shore are regulated, so should the hours of work of seamen be regulated. In fact, there should be no discrimination between the workers on land and those at sea, especially when the latter spend most of their lives at sea away from home and are deprived of all the comforts which human beings on shore may enjoy.

Let us now proceed to examine where Indian seamen stand with regard to the hours of work. As already stated, the hours of work on board ship are not regulated by any Act of Indian legislature or by any administrative regulations framed by the Government. There are no collective agreements either, as we find in some Western countries. It is only by custom that the period of work is regulated, if at all, and the working periods vary to a great extent with different ratings and also to some extent on different lines. According to the information supplied by the Government of India to the International Labour Office, the hours of work of Indian seamen are stated to be generally as follows:[1]

"*Deck hands*: At sea, from about 5-30 a. m. or 6 a. m. to 5 p. m. or 5 30 p. m., with two intervals of one hour each for meals and one hour's duty on look-out. Shorter hours are worked on Saturdays and Sundays. On Saturdays from 5-30 a. m. or 6 a. m. to 2 p. m. or 1 p. m. with one hour off for meals, and on Sundays from 5-30 a. m. or 6 a m. to 9 a. m. In port, from 6 a. m. to 5-30 p. m. with the same intervals for meals and shorter hours as above on Saturdays and Sundays.

"*Engine-room crew*: At sea the crew is divided into watches. Each watch is four hours on duty and eight hours off duty. In port the hours of duty are

[1] *The I. L. O. Report on the Regulation of Hours of Work on Board Ship*, 1929, p. 206.

from 7 a. m. to 5 p. m. with intervals for meals as above. Shorter hours are worked on Saturdays, 7 a. m. to 2 p. m. with one hour off, and no work is done on Sundays except that necessary to maintain lighting and sanitary services.

"*Saloon crew*: The duties performed by this section of the crew are so various that any general statement regarding hours of work would be misleading. Broadly speaking, men are required to be on duty during service hours, which vary with the class of employment and the rating of the individual."

These hours of work are not strictly followed. It is a common complaint among Indian seamen, especially the catering staff, that they are required to work longer than the periods mentioned in the Government of India memorandum above referred to. It is said that the actual hours of work for the catering staff are very long, being 14 to 19 hours a day. This is further corroborated by the British Trades Union Congress Delegation to India when they say that the working hours of Indian seamen "may vary from twelve to eighteen and nineteen per day".[2] The very fact that the Government could not make a general statement regarding the hours worked by the saloon men, shows that the hours are not properly regulated even by custom, and that they are unduly long. The saloon men are required to be at the beck and call of everybody on board between the hours of

[2] *Report on Labour Conditions in India*, p. 41.

6 a. m. and midnight. The condition of those who work on cargo ships is still worse. An idea of conditions on cargo ships is afforded by the following quotation from a letter which Mr. Le Touzel (Adviser to the Seamen's Delegate, British Empire, to the Preparatory Maritime Meeting held in November-December 1935) received from a cargo-ship catering department hand:

"I am not scared of work and I do not mind what I do. Since joining this ship I have been working 16 hours every day, and even then every thing is not done. I suppose the boy is dispensed with under the economy cry. You might not credit it, but I can assure you that to clean all the brass in my section would take 4 to 5 hours every day. Here are a few items: 6 large windows, 13 ports, 7 fans, 6 cabins with at least 12 drawer handles each, 2 switches, lamps, steps, etc., a bathroom and lavatory, smoke-room, saloon, 2 long alleyways, a large pantry with copper press and boiler, and the larder also has brass switches. Then of course I have 6 beds to make and all the 'scrub-outs', besides dusting and table to lay and look after three times a day."[3]

The writer of this letter is not an Indian seaman, but there is plenty of evidence that the conditions of Indian seamen are by no means different; if anything, they are perhaps worse.

[3] See *Report and Record of the I. L. O. Preparatory Maritime Meeting*, November-December, 1935, p. 216.

2. THE I. L. O. CONVENTION

Realising the importance of the subject, the International Labour Conference held in 1936 adopted a Convention fixing the hours of work on board ship. The provisions of the Convention are summarised as follows:

The Convention imposes an 8-hour day and a 56-hour week at sea for all watch-keeping deck crew with some relaxation on arrival and sailing days and 48 hours a week for daymen. In port it lays down a 48-hour week. For engine-room crew the hours are 56 and 48 at sea and in port respectively, while the catering staff are to have, at sea, 12 hours rest out of 24 on passenger ships and 10 hours' work a day on others, and 8 hours, with possible exceptions, in port. All hours in excess of these are to be overtime compensated in such manner as national laws or agreement may prescribe.

3. NEED FOR REGULATION

It is really unfortunate that the Government of India are of the opinion that "it will not be practicable to bring down immediately the *lascar's* hours of work to the scale prescribed in the Convention," though they agree that Indian seamen "work considerably longer hours than European seamen."[4] Their contention is that the ratification of the Convention by India would have the effect of introducing for Indian seamen shorter hours than those applying to British seamen with whom

[4] *Legislative Assembly Debates*, October 1, 1937, p. 2858.

they mainly come into competition.[5] In the first place, the fear that the introduction of shorter hours of work for Indian seamen may have an adverse effect on the opportunities of their employment on British ships is groundless. The general conditions with regard to wages, food, accommodation etc., under which Indian seamen work on British ships, are so low, when compared to those of British seamen, that shortening the *lascars'* hours of work will not come in the way of being engaged on British ships. On the other hand, Indian seamen will lose their employment if they continue to work under the existing conditions which are very bad; already a number of them are losing employment on the ground that the conditions which they receive are worse than the conditions given to European sailors and that they thus tend to have a demoralising effect on all seamen. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that the working conditions of Indian seamen should be improved in every way, so that they may be employed in increasing numbers on British and other European ships.

Secondly, ratification of the Convention by India will not result in shorter hours for Indian seamen to any appreciable extent than those applying to British seamen. Under the Convention, the hours of work prescribed at sea are 56 per week in the case of deck and engine-room crews and 70 per week for the catering staff, whereas

[5] *Government of India's (Department of Commerce) Letter to Provincial Govts.*, dated 8-12-1937.

they are 64, 56 and 70 per week respectively for British seamen under collective agreements concluded at the British National Maritime Board in 1936.[5] Thus, both under the Convention and British Collective Agreements, the hours of labour are the same for the engine-room and saloon crews. It is only in the case of the deck crew that there is a difference of eight hours per week. But this difference is not so great as to come in the way of Indian seamen obtaining employment. Thus it would be quite practicable to ratify the Convention without any delay.

It is noteworthy that some principal maritime countries have already gone further than the provisions of the Geneva Convention. In *France*, an 8-hour day and a 48-hour week are being observed since 1919,[7] and very recently seamen have been included in the legislation providing for the establishment of the 40-hour week.[8] Similarly, seamen in the *U. S. S. R.* have an 8-hour day and a 48-hour week. What is more, for those engaged on heavy work, such as stoking in ships which burn coal, the daily hours of work are seven.[9] An 8-hour day and a 48-hour week are also in existence in the U. S. A.[10] The International Convention thus

6 *The I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1936-37, p. 505.

7 *Report and Record of the Preparatory Maritime Meeting*, November-December, p. 218.

8 *The I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1936-37, p. 505.

9 *Record of Proceedings of the I. L. Conference*, 21st and 22nd Sessions, 1936, p. 129.

10 *The I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1936-37, p. 506.

provides for conditions which are less favourable than those which already exist under the national laws of some countries. In fact, the provisions of the Convention are very modest and hence there can be no justification for its being non-ratified by India.

CHAPTER V

HOLIDAYS WITH PAY

Annual leave with pay is just as necessary for seamen as for other sections of workers. It contributes in a considerable measure to workmen's happiness, health and efficiency. The holiday should be *with* pay, because when holidays are taken *without* pay, their beneficial effect tends to be lost, especially among the low paid workers, owing to the resultant financial worry. The employment of seamen, too, not only keeps them away from their homes, often for long periods at a time, but also deprives them of that regular and beneficial relaxation which the worker ashore obtains from being able to get away from his workplace even on working days. Moreover, Indian seamen do not enjoy the benefit of weekly rest or compensation thereof, which has become traditional for the general body of workers ashore. It has been a common grievance with Indian seamen that considerable sections of workers in industry have been given priority in many matters, while their own claims to at least equal treatment have been neglected.

Having considered the importance of the problem of annual leave with pay for seamen, the International Labour Organisation adopted in 1936 a Draft Convention on the subject. It provides for a minimum holiday with pay of 12 working days for masters, officers and wireless operators, and nine working days for other

members of the crew, of seagoing cargo and passenger vessels, including sailing ships. This holiday is due in respect of each completed year of continuous service with the same undertaking. In order to ease the application of this condition as to continuous service in the case of seamen signed on under voyage agreements, it is provided that in calculating a year's service, short interruptions of service up to a total of six weeks are not to break the continuity of the periods of service which precede and follow them. Pay during the holiday period is to consist of the employee's usual remuneration plus a suitable subsistance allowance.

It is unfortunate that the Government of India decided not to ratify the Convention. They stated: "The replies received show that practically all the authorities, etc., consulted except the All-India Seamen's Federation, are of the opinion that the provisions are not suited to the conditions prevalent in India. They also indicate the possibility that the adoption of the Convention, far from benefiting Indian seamen, might affect them adversely in more than one way, as for instance, affecting their continuity of service, scale of wages, etc.. In the circumstances, the Government of India do not propose to take any action on the Convention".[1]

These objections raised by the Government are merely imaginary. In the first place, it is not clear

[1] See *Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, October 1, 1937, p. 2858.

which were the organisations that expressed the opinion that the Convention was not suitable to the conditions of Indian seamen; and one may be forgiven for assuming that these views were expressed only by the employers' organisations and by the Provincial Governments which based their conclusions on the opinion of the employers. The workers' organisation which was consulted, the All-India Seamen's Federation, is a body to which all the seamen's unions in India are affiliated; and this organisation has declared in unmistakable terms that it was in favour of the adoption of the Convention. Secondly, it is not shown how the provisions of the Convention are not suited to the conditions of Indian seamen. In fact, the statement is so vague that it cannot be taken too seriously. Thirdly, the contention that the adoption of the Convention would adversely affect the employment of Indian seamen, cannot be sustained on any grounds The Government seem to think that if the Convention is adopted, there may be no economic inducement for British and other European shipowners to employ Indian seamen and that they may be thrown out of employment. This fear is unwarranted. On the contrary, the payment of low wages to Indian seamen and the unfavourable conditions under which they work have been already seized upon in some quarters as a convenient argument for agitation to get Indian seamen removed from European ships. This has been shown in detail in Chapter III. It is, therefore, necessary that the conditions of Indian seamen should be

improved in every respect with a view to their being employed on European ships in greater numbers. Again, the Government of India's contention that the granting of holidays with pay would affect the continuity of service is strange. As already pointed out, seamen are employed only for limited periods and not continuously for a number of years. In fact shipping is an industry with intermittent employment. What the Government perhaps think is that there would be practical difficulties in granting holidays to seamen when they work with more than one employer. If it is so, our answer is that this difficulty can be easily got over by giving effect to the very valuable suggestion made by the Committee on Holidays with Pay appointed by the British Parliament. The Committee recommended that "it may be necessary to introduce some such system as the stamping of employees' cards by the employers, so that the holiday payment may be made proportionately by the various employers who employed the employee during the year preceding the taking of the holiday".[2] The principle of leave proportionate to the length of service is already introduced in some countries. For instance, in Denmark seamen who cannot show 360 days' sea service with the same shipowner are entitled to paid leave proportionate to the length of their service with each shipowner during the year.[3] The same is the case in Belgium.[4]

[2] *Report of the Committee on Holidays with Pay*, p. 61.
[3] *The I. L. O. Year Book*, 1937-38, p. 536.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 534.

It is again important to note that seamen of many European and other countries are already entitled to certain holidays with pay under legislative measures or under national collective agreements between shipowners and seamen's organisations. This is shown in the following table:

Subordinate ratings[5]

Country	Holidays
Australia	14
Belgium	6
Brazil	15
Chile	7–15
Denmark	12
Dutch East Indies	7 (2 × 5)
France	15
Germany	6–20
Iceland (S. S. Co.)	7
Italy	8
Mexico	4–6
Netherlands	7 (2 × 5)
New Zealand	14
Norway	8
Poland	8–15
Sweden	4
U. S. A. (Tankers)	7
U. S. S. R.	12

In addition, deck and engineer officers enjoy holidays with pay in the following countries: Canada, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Japan and Spain.[6]

[5] *Holidays with Pay for Seamen*, I. L. O., 1935, p. 76; and the *I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1937-38, pp. 534–39.

[6] *Ibid.* p. 75.

In Great Britain, only officers had hitherto been entitled to paid annual leave under collective agreements. Since December 1937, however, when the special agreement, applicable to ships owned by Furness, Withy and Co. trading from New York, came into force, subordinate ratings employed on these ships are entitled to one week's paid annual leave.[7]

As pointed out by Mr. Reed, the British Empire Seamen's Adviser to the Preparatory Maritime Meeting held at Geneva in 1935, at least 75 per cent. of the shipowning countries in Europe have the principle of holidays with pay established in their mercantile marines.[8] Under these circumstances, it seems rather late in the day to argue that the granting of holidays to the members of Indian crews would adversely affect their employment on European ships. The various schemes regarding holidays with pay for seamen that are in vogue in the above mentioned countries are in themeselves an argument in favour of extending the measure to India. This extension, which can best be done by ratifying the Geneva Convention, is necessary in the interest of equalisation of working conditions all over the world.

7 *The I. L, O. Year-Book*, 1937-38, p. 538.

8 *Report and Record of the Preparatory Maritime Meeting*, Geneva, 1935, p. 243.

CHAPTER VI

WAGES

1. WAGE POSITION SINCE 1912

The earliest available data regarding the rates of wages of Indian seamen are those of the year 1912. It is important to remember that these rates were paid to Bombay crews on P. and O. ships. With regard to the rates paid to Calcutta crews, we have no information for the year 1912. Similar is the case with regard to the rates paid to those Bombay seamen employed on ships other than P. and O. ships. We cannot, therefore, take these rates as illustrative of the scales generally applied to all Bombay seamen and on all ships, especially in view of the fact that the scales of wages paid by the P. and O. were generally higher than those paid by other companies.

According to these rates,[1] the deck serang was paid a monthly salary of Rs. 36-8 which was the highest among the deck staff. The lowest rates were paid to lascars, some of whom got only Rs. 10 per month. The highest paid lascars received Rs. 20. In the Engine Department, the serang earned Rs. 36-8 which was the highest, while the lowest paid employee was the bhandary-mate who got only Rs. 10. Coming to the Saloon Department, we find that the highest paid

[1] Table showing these rates is given in Appendix A.

seaman was the chief cook (passenger) with a salary of Rs. 108-12, while the lowest paid was the pantry-boy with a salary of Rs. 8-12 only. The scullion, the baker's mate, the butcher's mate and the knifeman each received Rs. 18-12, while the topas (cleaner) got only Rs. 15-12. These figures clearly show that, excepting the pay of the chief cook, the rates of wages paid to Indian seamen were generally low even on P. and O. ships.

In the year 1914 there was some rise in the rates. In the Deck Department, the serang now got Rs. 42 instead of Rs. 36-8. The lowest paid lascars whose pay varied between Rs. 10 and Rs. 20 in 1912 now got a small increase, the maximum being raised to Rs. 22 and the minimum to Rs. 11. In the Engine Departmant, the serang got an increase of Rs. 3-8, his pay being raised to Rs. 40. The lowest paid bhandary-mate who received Rs. 10 now got Rs. 12. There was also a general rise in the Saloon Department. The pantry boy now earned Rs. 11-12 instead of Rs. 8-12.

As already pointed out, the above rates were paid on the P. and O. steamers, which were higher than those paid by other companies. This means that seamen employed by other companies received still lower wages, as can be seen from the rates given in Table I in Appendix A.

Immediately after the close of the war, the rise in prices in India for all commodities including the necessities of life, was of the most serious character. In the

case of food grains, the prices in 1919 generally rose by an average of 93 per cent. since the commencement of the war, while the increase in piece goods was just over 190 per cent. for imported goods and just over 60 per cent. for Indian made goods.[2] The cost of living rose by leaps aud bounds and reached its highest level in 1920, as can be seen from the following figures for Bombay.[3]

1914 (before the war)	100
1918	154
1919	175
1920	183

With the rise in prices, there was a general tendency towards an upward movement in the wages of industrial workers. The wages generally rose by 75 to 100 per cent.. Thus, the wages in the mill industry of Bombay increased by 100 per cent.,[4] while the wages of Indian railway workers almost doubled with the post-war revisions in 1920.[5]

Under these altered conditions of high cost of living, Indian seamen found it almost impossible to maintain themselves and their families without a substantial rise in wages. In fact, shipowners should have realised the gravity of the situation and should have come forward

[2] *Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India during the year 1919*, London, 1920, p. 63.

[3] *Labour Gazette*, Bombay, January 1924, p. 12.

[4] *Ibid.*, January, 1922, p. 14.

[5] *Memorandum by the Railway Board for the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 13.

with an increase of at least 75 per cent. in the rates of wages. But they utterly failed in their duty towards their employees. Seamen were, therefore, compelled to resort to strike, demanding higher wages. The year 1920 witnessed the Bombay seamen's strike which lasted for about four days. The employers, recognising that the strikers' demand was legitimate, raised the rates.

Under these new rates, the highest paid seaman in the deck department, namely, the serang, whose salary varied between Rs. 37 to Rs. 45, was granted a scale of Rs. 56 to Rs. 75. The wages of the lowest paid topas were raised from Rs. 14 to Rs. 17 to Rs. 25 to Rs. 28. In the engine department, the firemen were granted a salary of Rs. 29 to Rs. 30 instead of the old scale of Rs. 19 to Rs. 20. In the saloon department, the wages of the 4th cook were raised from Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 to Rs. 22-8. These instances are only illustrative and not exhaustive. Every category of seaman was given an increase.

In the year 1919, the seamen of Calcutta also succeeded in getting a rise in their scales of remuneration, ranging from 30 to 75 per cent. as the result of a strike. Under these new scales, the deck and engine-room serangs, who are the highest paid subordinate ratings in these departments, could earn Rs. 60 a month instead of Rs. 35 as before. Similarly, the wages of the deck and saloon topas were raised from Rs. 14 to Rs. 22. Every seamen secured a rise. It is, however, important

to bear in mind that the scales of Calcutta seamen were not taken up to the level of Bombay in spite of this rise. Even the increased rates were utterly inadequate, especially in view of the high cost of living during the post-war period.

It may be of interest to note the comparison between the increase in the rates secured by Indian seamen on the one hand and that obtained by the seamen of some foreign countries on the other, during the period immediately after the close of the war. To take a few countries, the wages of seamen in the United Kingdom rose by 240 to 300 per cent. in 1920 over the wages in pre-war times,[6] by 187 per cent. in Netherlands,[7] and by 80 to 95 per cent. in Australia.[8] Judging by these figures, one must admit that the increase granted to Indian seamen was not carried to the same extent as was done in other countries.

Even the increased rates of Calcutta seamen utterly failed to satisfy their bare needs of livelihood. Moreover, their rates were lower than the Bombay rates. This naturally led to wide-spread discontent at the Calcutta port. In 1921, the Indian Seamen's Union of Calcutta demanded an increase in wages by 50 per cent.[9] But as the shipping companies did not respond to

6 *Wage Changes in Various Countries, 1914–1921*, p. 29.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

9 *History and Developments of the Indian Seamen's Union, Calcutta*, p. 50.

the Union's demand, the seamen became restive and their discontent took a serious turn. Finally in June 1922, they were compelled to go on a general strike, which, however, came to a close after a period of twelve days, on the assurance of the Union to move in the matter when better times would come.[10] Thus the strike ended in favour of shipowners, and the wages remained stationary. Since then there has been no change in the wage position of Calcutta seamen, though more than seventeen years have passed.

Encouraged by the failure of the Calcutta seamen's strike, the shipping companies determined to reduce the wages of Bombay seamen. The actual reduction was brought about in September 1923, when the Liners' Conference fixed the new rates.[11] The only company which did not reduce the wages was the P. and O. Company. The reduction ranged between 10 to 20 per cent..

An interesting incident of how the brokers played their part cunningly in forcing the reduction on seamen, was narrated by the Acting General Secretary of the Indian Seamen's Union, Bombay, in the course of his oral evidence before the Royal Commission. He said: "The brokers and the shipping master told the men that one or two ships had not taken crews from Bombay, and said: 'Therefore it is better for you to take smaller

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
11 *Maritime Statistical Handbook*, pp. 56-58.

wages than that ships should not take crews from Bombay; you had better put your finger impressions on these documents'. They reduced the wages by that means".[12] The quotation needs no comments.

The poor seamen were compelled to accept the reduced rates, as they were not strongly organised to resist the onslaught. These reduced rates are maintained even to this day, though fifteen years have elapsed since their first introduction.

2. EXISTING WAGES

Tables showing the existing rates of wages both at Bombay and Calcutta are given in Appendix A. A glance at these tables shows that the wages of a considerable number of categories of seamen fall below the low figure of Rs. 30 a month. These categories are: Lascars, Lascar Boys, Bhandary Mate and Topas in the Deck Department; Lampman, Fireman, Coal-trimmers and Bhandary Mate in the Engine-Room Department; Third and Fourth Cooks, Baker's Mate, Pantryman's Mate, Butcher's Mate, Topas, Scullion, Saloon Boys, Messroom Assistant, Messroom Mate, Chief Engineer's, Captain's or Officer's Boys, General Servants, Marconi Boy, Saloon Crew Cook's Mate and Bell Boy in the Saloon Department. Seamen belonging to these categories form the majority of the crew on a ship. What is worse, when the men serve on coasting line ships, some more

[12] *R. C. L. I., Evidence*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 226.

categories will have to be added to this list, as the rates on coasting lines are lower than those on foreign lines. Again, the proportion of seamen receiving less than Rs. 30 a month is greater in Calcutta than in Bombay, as the rates of wages are lower in the former port.

Further, the wages of certain ratings fall below the extremely low figure of Rs. 20 a month, as can be seen from the following table:

Category	Wages in Rs.
Pantryman's mate	18–20
Engine bhandary mate	17–20
Fourth cook	16–20
Saloon crew cook's mate	16–20
Deck bhandary mate	15–20
Coal-trimmer	18
Messroom mate	14–16
Boys (P. and O.)	15
Lascar boy	13–15
Marconi boy	8–10

The number of categories receiving less than Rs. 20 a month is greater in Calcutta than in Bombay. Needless to emphasize that these low wages are utterly inadequate for any human being to properly maintain himself and his family. According to the principle that every man must be paid according to his work, it must be admitted on all hands that the wages of Indian seamen are notorious exceptions to this rule. The work of a seaman is, by its very nature, exacting. The special discipline to which a seaman is subject, his life of wan-

dering confinement, his lack of family life, his direct and perilous struggle with the rough elements of nature, all these entitle him to the right of receiving higher remuneration than what is usually paid to an ordinary labourer working on shore. But, judging by their rates of wages, all these considerations are brushed aside in the case of Indian seamen.

That, in the majority of cases, the wages fall below the subistance level, cannot be disputed. This is particularly true when we take into consideration the fact that the employment of Indian seamen is not continuous but intermittent. As shown in Chapter III, only about one-third of them can secure employment at a time, while the remaining two-thirds remain unemployed. This means that on an average every seaman has no work for a period of two years after being employed for twelve months. In other words, he is expected to maintain himself and his family for a period of three years on the wages he earns for twelve months. To illustrate the point, if a seaman's monthly wages amount to Rs. 30, he is able to earn Rs. 360 at the end of the year, when he is discharged. As he cannot expect to be employed for the next two years, he must be content with Rs. 360 during his period of unemployment. Thus he virtually earns only Rs. 360 during the whole term of three years, which means an average earning of Rs. 10 per month !

This miserable lot of Indian seamen can only be improved by fixing a decent minimum wage. It is the

duty of the Government of India as well as Provincial Governments of maritime provinces to protect Indian seamen by compelling shipowners to pay them a comfortable minimum wage, especially in view of the fact that shipping companies are making huge profits. Mr. Henson, the British Empire Workers' Adviser to the Thirteenth Session of the International Labour Conference, declared that the shipping companies of Great Britain, on whose ships an overwhelming majority of Indian seamen are employed, have been paying dividends ranging from 10½ to 35 per cent..[13] He further observed: "They have given debenture bonuses of 350 per cent.-in 1927-and so it goes on. Their general reserve is in some cases as much as two million pounds."

Moreover, there has been considerable improvement in the economic position of the shipping industry all over the world since 1936. According to the *I. L. O. Year-Book*, great activity prevailed in certain markets during the year 1937–38, and the average amount of laid-up tonnage throughtout the world afforded clear evidence of the great number of ships which had been put into commission again. On account of this improved state of shipping, a general increase in wage rates of seamen took place in practically all the important maritime countries. This is evident from the following table which gives a general indication of how increments have

[13] See *International Labour Conference, Proceedings of the 13th Session*, p. 213.

operated. The figures refer to able seamen employed on vessels:[14]

Country	Currency	Monthly Rates 1936 End	Monthly Rates 1938 Beginning
Belgium	Belgian francs	1,047	1,152
Chile	Chilean pesos	160-396 + approx.	10 to 20%
Denmark	Danish crowns	168	200
Estonia	Estonian „	61.80	72
Finland	Finnish marks	870	1,150
France	French francs	655	790
Germany	Reich marks	103 + approx.	20%
Great Britain	English £	£8 15s. 6d.	£9 12s. 6d.
Greece	English £	£4 6s. 0d.	£6 0s. 0d.
Italy	Lire	465	513
Japan	Yen	48	plus 20%
Latvia	Lats	60	90
Netherlands	Florins	80	89
New Zealand	N. Z. £	£15 6s.	£18
Norway	Norw. crowns	149	170
Portugal	Escudos	380	plus 8 to 9%
Sweden	Swed. crowns	148/158	170
U. S. A.	Dollars	57.50-62.50	72.50

That the increase in almost all the above countries is not slight but substantial should be noted. Perhaps the only important maritime country where seamen did not get any increase is India. That this should be so is extremely unfortunate, especially considering the fact that the state of the shipping industry has improved, that shipowners employing Indians have been making huge profits, that the wages of Indian seamen are the lowest in the

[14] *The I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1937-38, p. 521.

world, and that they have remained stationary for nearly twenty years. Under these depressing circumstances, there is no hope for Indian seamen unless the Government of India comes to their aid by immediately fixing a minimum wage which would ensure a decent standard of living for every seaman.

Another glaring injustice to Indian seamen is that for similar work carried out by them there is no uniformity in wages. For instance, the P. and O. Company and the British India Steam Navigation Company, both of which are controlled by practically the same management, pay different scales of wages for the same kind of work carried out under exactly similar conditions. That is to say, the B. I. S. N. Company pays less than the P. and O. There should be uniformity in regard to working conditions and remuneration of seamen irrespective of their serving with different employers.

It is an accepted principle of labour legislation that workers should be paid extra remuneration in respect of overtime work. This principle is embodied in the Indian Factories Act, 1934. Under Section 47 of the Act, every factory worker is entitled to receive a wage at the rate of one-and-a-half times his ordinary rate of pay for the overtime worked by him. But in the case of Indian seamen, there is no such provision made in the Indian Merchant Shipping Act. In fact, the Act does not even contain a provision limiting the hours of work. It is,

therefore, essential that legislation limiting hours of work and entitling seamen to extra remuneration for overtime should be enacted. Seamen of almost all the important maritime countries of the world receive extra remuneration for working outside the prescribed hours. Thus overtime is paid to seamen in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Irish Free State, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.[15] Special allowances in certain cases are paid in Rumania and Spain. India is one of the few principal maritime countries where semen are not paid for overtime.

3. COMPARISON BETWEEN BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA

Since the very beginning, the wage rates prevalent in Calcutta have been lower than those in Bombay. This difference continues even to this day, as is evident from the following table :

Category	Deck Department Bombay Rates Rs.	Calcutta Rates Rs.
Serang	65	60
Seacunney	60	55
Second Tindal	35	30
Cassab	32	30
Winchman	34	28
Lascar	22-30	18-25
Bhandary	30	25
Topas	23	22

[15] See *Maritime Satistical Handbook.*

Similar differences exist in the engine and saloon departments as well.

This difference between the Bombay rates and the Calcutta rates cannot be justified on any grounds. It appears that shipowners are determined to have this difference maintained in their own interest. They perhaps feel that its existence is necessary in order to keep up the rivalry between Bombay crews and Calcutta crews and thus creat a division in the ranks of Indian seamen. Not only Calcutta seamen but also Bombay seamen have to suffer on account of the lower rates paid to the former. Calcutta seamen suffer because they receive lower wages; Bombay seamen suffer because too many Calcutta seamen are being employed on lower wages to the detriment of Bombay seamen. There are many instances of Calcutta seamen being sent to Bombay for the purpose of recruitment. This naturally leads to dissentions and divisions between the two groups of Indian seamen. Shipowners find it profitable to engage Calcutta men at Bombay, as their rates of remuneration are kept lower. Hence Calcutta seamen are tempted to go to Bombay for securing employment. This unhealthy state of affairs, which adversly affects the interests of Indian seamen as a class, can only be brought to an end by paying equal wages to all Indian seamen, irrespective of their belonging to different ports. Hence the wage rates at Calcutta should be immediately raised to the level of Bombay rates. If shipowners fail to take this step, the Govern-

ment of India should move in the matter and set the matter right.

4. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN WAGES

The remuneration paid to Indian seamen is miserably low in comparison with that earned by British seamen, though both the British sailor and the Indian lascar work on the same ships. The following figures showing the monthly rates of wages for various classes of seafaring men bear out the truth of our statement:

	£.	s.	d.
Quartermaster:			
„ British	10	2	6
„ Bombay	4	10	0
„ Calcutta	4	2	6
Sailor:			
„ British	9	12	6
„ Bombay	2	6	6
„ Calcutta	1	17	6
Greaser:			
„ British	10	12	6
„ Bombay	2	19	3
„ Calcutta	1	19	0
Fireman:			
„ British	10	2	6
„ Bombay	2	2	9
„ Calcutta	1	14	6
Assistant Steward:			
„ British	8	17	6
„ Bombay	3	3	0
„ Calcutta	2	11	0

It is often argued that this comparison between the rates of wages of British seamean and those of Indian seamen is not fair inasmuch as a British sailor is far more efficient than his Indian confrere. In fact, Sir Geoffrey Corbett, the Government of India Delegate to the Thirteenth Session of the International Labour Conference, maintained that Indian seamen were physically weak and that one white seaman was equal to two Indians.[16] Sir Geoffrey Corbett's view cannot, however, be accepted unless it is substantiated by proper evidence. On the other hand, it has been admitted even by some Europeans that Indian seamen compare favourably well with white seamen. It has been stated, for instance, in the *Journal of the National Union of Seamen of Great Britain and Ireland* that Indian seamen are better able than white men to stand a tropical climate.[17] Commenting on the efficiency of Indian seamen, Mr. J. E. P. Curry, the Ex-shipping Master, Bombay, who was a European, had stated: "The increased employment of Indian seamen in recent years would seem to indicate that they are up to the required standard of efficiency." [18]

Even if we accept the view of Sir Geoffrey Corbett that one British sailor is equal to two Indian lascars,

[16] *International Labour Conference, 13th Session, Proceedings*, p. 220.

[17] See *R. C. L. I, Evidence*, Vol. V, Part I, p. 249.

[18] *Royal Commission on Indian Labour, Memorandum of written Evidence of Government witnesses, Bombay Presidency, 1929*, p. 18.

it becomes clear in that case that the latter should be paid half the amount of wages of a British sailor. But from the figures quoted above, it is evident that the wages of Indian seamen are generally lower than one-fourth or one-fifth of what the British seafarer earns. Mr. Sexton, M. P. once declared in the House of Commons that the wages paid to Indian lascars were "incommensurate with good citizenship."[19]

It is important to remember that this discrimination in wages adversly affects the interests of all seamen irrespective of their being Europeans or Indians. The low wages of Indians can be conveniently used as an argument by employers against the demand of European seamen to raise their wages. The employer can well say to European seamen: "If you demand more wages, we do not want you. We can get Indians who are willing to work at very cheap rates." The same employer can well say to Indians: "If you ask for a rise in wages, there is no reason why we should employ you. We employ you because of your great virtue of accepting low wages. If you insist on more, there are Europeans to take your place." Thus the discrimination in wages helps the employers in exploiting all workers and also puts an obstacle in the way of workers for bettering their conditions. Unless all seamen irrespective of their race, colour or nationality combine together against shipowners and make a united demand for

[19] *House of Commons Debates*, March 11, 1924.

uniformity in wages, the present discrimination is bound to continue.

CHAPTER VII

CONDITIONS ON BOARD SHIP

The general condition and health of seamen while in employment depends on a number of factors such as accommodation, food, medical treatment, etc.. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the existing conditions and to suggest measures for their improvement.

1. ACCOMMODATION

Under Section 90 of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, every place in a ship which is occupied by seamen or apprentices should have for each of them a space of not less than twelve superficial feet and not less than 72 cubic feet. That this accommodation is very inadequate when compared with that provided in Great Britain and some other countries is evident from the following table:-[1]

Country	Accommodation (In cubic feet)
Australia	140
Norway	140
Denmark	123
France	123
Great Britain	120
New Zealand	120
India	72

It is urgent that the accommodation under the Indian Act should be increased so as to bring it in line with

[1] Compiled from the laws of the respective countries

the provisions of at least the British Act. Again, the Indian law with regard to accommodation is defective in many respects. While under the British law, cooking galleys, whatever their position, must not be considered as spaces intended for the crew, there is no such restriction under the provisions of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act. The British law also lays down that there must be at least seven feet between the flooring and the lower part of the beams while such a provision does not exist in the Indian law. Similarly, there is no provision at all regarding lighting in the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, while in Great Britain the minimum obligation for necessary light is such that an ordinary newspaper can be read in any part of the cabin. As regards ventilation, Section 90 of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act is very vague, when it says that the place shall be "properly ventilated and properly protected from weather and sea." What is more, the Section does not even contain a provision for making necessary rules under the Act. It is essential that definite rules should be laid down in the matter of accommodation.

In this connection, the attention of the Government of India should be drawn to the new Regulations concerning crew accommodation which were issued in Great Britain in 1937.[2] These Regulations should be followed in India. The British Regulations lay down "the minimum considered necessary to furnish a satisfactory

[2] See *Industrial and Labour Information*, October 11, 1937, pp. 54–58.

standard of accommodation." They are based on modern standards, and are absolutely essential in order to ensure the health and efficiency of seamen.

The main provisions of the Regulations may be summarised as follows: Accommodation must be so situated in relation to lamp rooms, paint rooms, and places where offensive cargoes may be carried, as to entail no danger of discomfort to the crew. Separate sleeping accommodation must be provided for sailors, firemen, apprentices and stewards. Each watch of seamen, firemen, or similar ratings on duty in watches must be provided with a separate sleeping room or rooms. All sleeping rooms must be fitted with a bed for each person accommodated and with adequate seating. Each seaman must be provided with a clothes locker, to be placed in the sleeping room unless an alternative position has been approved. Beds must be at least six feet long and two feet wide; and must be constructed of metal or hardwood according to a design approved by the Board of Trade. Separate messrooms must be provided for different categories of crew in the same way as in the case of sleeping rooms. They must be large enough to accommodate at the same time all the men who use them. They must be fitted with tables, seats, and lockers. Food lockers must never be situated in sleeping rooms, and must be high enough from the deck to facilitate cleaning. Washrooms and bathrooms must be in close proximity to the sleeping accommodation for deck staff, and to the

stokehold or engineroom for stockehold and engine-room personnel. The number of W.C.s proportionate to the number of the crew which must be provided is fixed at one per ten men for crews of less than 100, ten for the first 100, and four per 100 for any additional number. All crew spaces must be adequately ventilated in such a way as to ensure not only a satisfactory supply of pure air, but also a comfortable temperature and a sufficiency of air movement under all weather conditions.

It is important to mention, in this connection, that the prescribing of lower scales of accommodation for Indian and other Asiatic crews in their own national laws have induced some European countries to prescribe a similar lower scale for Asiatic crews on their ships. In France, for example, the separate quarters which are reserved for Asiatic and African crews may contain sleeping accommodation such as is in use in their own native countries and not in France.[3] Similarly, according to the law of the Netherlands, separate quarters must be provided as mess rooms or living rooms, and sleeping quarters respectively for all, except in the case of Indian, Chinese or Malay seamen.[4] This is how the Indian law debases the conditions of Indian seamen on foreign ships.

2. FOOD

One of the characteristics of maritime labour is that

[3] *International Seamen's Conference, Genoa, 1920, Report IV*, p. 102.

[4] *The I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1937–38, p. 528.

the workers when on board ship are to be provided with food by employers. In consequence the food problem for seamen represents a practical problem of first-rate importance.

Under Section 28 (2) (f) of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, the master of a ship is required to enter into an agreement with every seaman regarding the scale of food which is to be supplied on board ship. The scale should be not less than a scale to be fixed by the Governor General in Council. The scale that is in force at present is given in Appendix B.

From the point of view of nutrition the provisions in the scale are defective in certain respects. Thus, fruit is conspicuous by its absence. That a proper diet of an industrial worker should include fruit cannot be denied, as the following quotation from the I. L. O. publication *Occupation and Health* would amply show: "Modern work would seem to show that a supply of the accessory substances is absolutely essential in a proper diet. Although they are present in varying amount in a large variety of the common foodstuffs, they may be best obtained by including in the daily dietary an ample supply of green vegetables and particularly the inclusion of a certain amount of milk and fresh fruit."[5] Fruit is included in the diet of seamen in Great Britain. Finnish seamen are given 400 grammes fresh or 150 grammes dried fruit every week.[6]

[5] *Occupation and Health*, Vol. I, p. 797.
[6] *Industrial and Labour Information*, September 26, 1938, p. 382.

The Finnish regulations also provide that in hot climates fish and fruit should, as far as possible, replace meat. Again, in India only dry fish is served. There is no provision for fresh fish, as is the case in Yugoslavia.[7]

Another defect in the Indian regulation is that there is no rule prescribing the number of meals to be provided in a day and the time when the meals should be served. Such regulation is absolutely necessary, especially in view of the fact that the hours of work of Indian seamen are not regulated by law. In the interest of their health it is essential that seamen should be entitled to meals at regular intervals. This is particularly so in the case of saloon men who are made to work for very long hours ranging from fourteen to nineteen. Again, the law should prescribe that meals should be hot at the time of being served. In this connection, mention may be made of the fact that seamen in Finland are entitled to three hot meals a day.[8] It is a common complaint among the Indian crews that they rarely get hot meals.

Under Section 91 of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, provision has been made for the inspection of foodstuffs, water, etc., on board ship by the Shipping Master. In spite of this arrangement the articles of food for the use of the Indian crews on board ship are found unfit for human consumption on many occasions. For instance, according to the *Annual Report of the Public Health*

[7] *The I. L. O. Year-Book*, 1938-39, p. 362

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 361.

Commissioner with the Government of India for 1936, at the port of Bombay, of the 193 samples of ghee that were examined from the food supplies for lascar crews, 47 were condemned as unfit for human consumption.[9] This gives us a percentage of nearly 25. In the case of Calcutta, of the 25 samples of ghee and 10 of lime juice examined, 7 and 8 respectively were found to be below standard.[10] It should be specially noted here that the proportion of the samples of lime juice condemned as unfit is as high as 80 per cent.. Coming to Karachi, of the 95 ghee samples analysed, 18 were found to be not genuine and unfit for human consumption.[11] These figures show in a telling manner, what quality of food is being served to Indian seamen on board ship. It is necessary that the law regarding the inspection of food supplies should be strictly enforced in every port, and that the shipowners who fail to comply with its provisions should be heavily fined.

Under Section 86 of the Act, if it is shown that any of the provisions are or have been bad in quality or unfit for use, the seaman is entitled to receive certain sums by way of compensation for that reduction or bad quality. If the allowance is reduced by not more than one-third of the quantity specified, a sum not exceeding three annas should be paid in the case of a European seaman or one anna in the case of an Indian seaman.

9 *Report for 1936*, p. 172.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 175.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

If the allowance is reduced by more than one-third, the respective compensation to be paid is six annas to a European and two annas to an Indian. In case the quality of the provision is bad, the compensation is eight annas and three annas respectively. Thus the Section contains racial discrimination. The fact that an Indian law should favour the whites is a sad commentary on the status of Indians in their own country. What is worse, such discrimination tends to increase the feeling of inferiority on the part of Indian seamen and a feeling of superiority on the part of the white seamen. It thus creates an undesirable division between the two sections of labour working together. It further results in economic injustic to Indian seamen, though they work side by side with white seamen on the same ships. It may be argued that this difference in compensation is only due to the difference in the scale of provisions of white seamen and that of Indian seamen, and hence the difference is justifiable. To this the answer is that the difference in the scale of provisions should also be condemned. In fact, no detail of legislation resulting in racial discrimination deserves to exist. It is high time that the Government of India removed this objectionable feature of the Act by raising the amount of compensation to be paid to Indian seamen and equalising it with that given to European seamen.

3. MEDICAL ATTENDANCE

Under Section 87 of the Indian Merchant Shipping

Act, all foreign-going British ships and all home-trade ships of more than 300 tons burden should have always on board a sufficient supply of medicines and appliances suitable for diseases and accidents likely to happen on sea voyages according to such scale as is from time to time issued by the Governor General in Council. Again, under Section 184 of the Act, only those ships carrying more than 100 unberthed passengers need have on board a medical officer. Thus, a large number of ships is excluded from the scope of this clause. Secondly, there is reason to believe that seamen do not receive adequate medical treatment on board ship. How inefficient and defective the medical service on steamers is, can be well understood from the evidence given by Major S. K. Engineer, Physician, J. J. Hospital, Bombay, before the Royal Commission. The evidence is so illuminating that one can do no better than quote the passages freely:

"While at sea, he (seaman) is treated either by one of the officers or the chief steward of the ship who plays the part of a doctor. At present there is no accommodation for a sick seaman. He has to sleep in the same room together with other seamen. This room contains from three to six berths for three or six seamen. While at sea, if he is found suffering from any of the venereal diseases, he has to occupy his own berth together with healthy seamen in the same room...........The ship's medicine chest is at present in any nook or corner. I have seen it even in the captain's bathroom...........It

contains some drugs which are as old as our grandfathers. There are others which are never used at all from the time the ship is launched till she is scrapped. There are no drugs recognised as specific for such conditions as cholera, dysentery, asthma, chronic bronchitis, rheumatism, etc. Some instruments and appliances are not replaced even when they go out of order. The doctor, the officer or the chief steward has also to do the work of the compounder and the dispenser. The recipes in the Medical Guide are either obsolete or antiquated at present times.........The doctor, the officer or the chief steward does not receive any instructions in the handling of the instruments or the appliances. Whenever an emergency arises he reads the Medical Guide and tries to carry out the instructions to the best of his ability."[12]

The quotation clearly indicates the most unsatisfactory way in which the medical service on board ship is being conducted. Hence there is no wonder if the incidence of sickness is greater among the Indian crew than among the white seamen. That this is so, is evident from the figures contained in a British Board of Trade publication which gives particulars of the mortality of the crews of ships during the year 1927. According to these statistics, says Prof. Belli, "Disease is shown to have been a much more frequent cause of mortality among Lascars (Indian seamen) than among other members of crews, although it was the principal cause

12 *R. C. L. I., Evidence, Vol. I, Part I*, pp. 542-43.

of death for all cases. About three-quarters of the deaths among Lascars were due to disease; of this rate, 20 per cent. were due to tuberculosis and 18 per cent. to pneumonia."[13]

One of the obvious ways of reducing this high rate of mortality among Indian seamen is to improve the medical service on board ships. This can be done by giving effect to the following suggestions, among others, which have been authoritatively made by Major. S. K. Engineer in the course of his evidence before the Royal Commission:[14]

1. Every ship must have a hospital consisting of two or more beds for sick seamen suffering from dysentery, diarrhoea, gastritis, etc., in order to segregate them from others who occupy the same room.

2. The ship's medicine chest must be located in the ship's hospital, and must contain such recognised drugs as are in common use at present by the medical profession. The medical officer of the company must be held responsible for the medicine chest to be in order according to the regulations. The ship's hospital should be inspected by competent authority in every port so as to see that it is kept in proper condition.

3. Those drugs that can be obtained in the form of pills or tablets must replace the present drugs—liquid or crystalline—to prevent any mistake on the part of those

[13] See *Occupation and Health*, I. L. O., Vol. II, pp. 819-20.
[14] *R. C. L. I.*, *Evidence*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 543.

inexperienced who carry on the work as compounder or dispenser.

4. The Medical Guide should be thoroughly revised by a committee consisting of European and Indian doctors who have experience of the Indian Mercantile Marine Service.

4. CARE OF THE SICK AND INJURED

The obligation of the shipowner or his representative to assist a sick or injured seaman during the voyage is a necessity inherent in the conditions of maritime work. The International Labour Conference adopted a Convention in 1936 under which the shipowner's liability toward a sick or injured seaman is clearly laid down. The Convention requires the employer to provide the sick or injured seaman with medical treatment and the supply of proper and sufficient medicines and therapeutical appliances, in addition to board and lodging. As long as the sick or injured seaman remains on board, the shipowner is liable to pay him full wages. After he is landed, the liability applies only to all or part of the wages in the case of seamen who have dependants. The shipowner remains liable until the sick or injured person has been cured or the sickness or incapacity has been declared of a permanent character. But national laws or regulations may limit his liability to a specified period, reckoned from the day of the injury or the commencement of the sickness, but not less than 16 weeks. Further, the Convention says that national laws or regulations may provide that

the liability of the shipowner shall cease from the time at which the sick or injured person becomes entitled to cash benefit under an insurance or compensation scheme or from the time at which he would have become entitled to it if he had been covered by the scheme. Having thus settled the connection between the shipowner's liability and the existing schemes of insurance or compensation, the Convention contains provisions on the right of repatriation of seamen landed during the voyage in consequence of sickness or injury and the safeguarding of the property left on board by the sick, injured or deceased seamen.

In a statement laid on the table of the Legislative Assembly on the 29th November, 1938, the Commerce Member of the Government of India outlined the course which the Government proposed to follow in respect of this Convention. The relevant part of the statement is quoted below:

"A close examination of the Convention has revealed that the Indian Merchant Shipping law already provides for the principal requirements of the Convention, except in the case of Articles 4 and 5. The main difference, so far as Article 4 is concerned, is that whilst laying down the general principle that a shipowner is liable to provide medical assistance until the sick or injured seaman is cured or until the sickness or incapacity is declared to be of a permanent character, the Convention limits the duration of the shipowner's liability to a period of not less than 16 weeks from the date of

commencement of the illness. The Indian Merchant Shipping Act, on the other hand, makes no reference to any specific period, but makes the shipowner responsible for providing assistance as long as the seaman remains on board or is in a foreign country. After careful consideration of the relative merits of the two sets of provisions the Government of India are of the opinion that, on the whole, the existing law affords better protection to the seaman than the limited assistance provided in the Convention for a period of 16 weeks, at the end of which he may still find himself ill in a foreign country without any means of support. Similarly, in regard to the shipowner's liability to pay wages to sick or injured seamen, dealt with in Article 5 of the Convention there are important differences between the provisions of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, which are based on those of the British Merchant Shipping Acts, and the requirements of the Convention. The Government of India are in sympathy with the principle laid down in the Article, but cannot ignore the consideration that, in view of the decision of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom not to amend the relevant provisions of the British Acts, a modification of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act would only benefit a limited number of Indian seamen, the majority of whom are employed on ships registered in the United Kingdom. In these circumstances, the Government of India have come to the conclusion that the Convention cannot be ratified by India at present."

The Indian Merchant Shipping Act already meets the principal requirements of the Convention, save on the important questions of the duration of medical assistance and of the right to wages.

Whereas the Convention provides that medical assistance shall continue, if necessary, for a period of not less than sixteen weeks, even where the shipowner has already discharged his obligation to repatriate (unless sickness or accident insurance assumes responsibility earlier), the Indian Act specifies no minimum period, but holds the shipowner liable until the seaman is cured or brought home to a proper return port, whichever first occurs. The Government of India refer to the case of a seaman who, still sick on the expiry of the sixteen weeks and not yet repatriated, finds himself without assistance and that too in a foreign country. They then conclude that on the whole the Indian Act affords better protection than the Convention in the matter of medical assistance.

It is true that there is a particular case where the Indian Act offers better protection than the Convention in the matter of assistance (medical care and maintenance.) That is the case of an Indian seaman who, having been put ashore sick in a foreign port, has not recovered at the end of 16 weeks (if national legislation adopts this minimum standard) sufficiently for him to be brought back to a proper return port: such a seaman would, in the absence of consular aid, be left destitute between the expiry of the 16 weeks and the date when he embarked on the return voyage. Without denying

the gravity of such a contingency, one must admit that cases of this kind are extremely rare.

Consider, on the other hand, the situation of seamen serving on Indian ships trading between Indian ports. They can, it would seem, be put ashore directly at any Indian port and be left there without any assistance. Again, in cases of sickness on Indian ships trading between India and a foreign country, one-half may be supposed to occur on the return voyage and will, when possible, be retained on board until an Indian port is reached when they may be put ashore and left without assistance. It seems, therefore, that the majority of sick seamen on Indian ships are likely to be put ashore in Indian ports and consequently would benefit by the Convention which assures them of a minimum of 16 weeks' assistance where necessary.

It is hardly necessary to observe that ratification of this or of any other Convention ought not to entail any lowering of the existing standard of protection, and that the present provision for assistance until cure or repatriation might well be retained side by side with a new provision for assistance for at least 16 weeks where necessary.

Under the Indian, as under the British, Merchant Shipping Act, a sick seaman's wages cease when he is put ashore, but the Convention requires that, if the seaman has dependants, his wages shall continue, at least in part, for a period which is defined in the same way as the period of medical assistance. The Government of

India state that they cannot ignore in this connection the decision of the British Government not to amend the relevant provisions of the British Act. The Government of India express themselves as being in sympathy with the principle of the Convention in the matter of wages, but state that an amendment of the Indian Act would only benefit a limited number of Indian seamen, since the majority are employed on ships registered in the United Kingdom. In these circumstances the Government of India have come to the conclusion that the Convention cannot be ratified at present.

The fact that an amendment of the Indian Act in the matter of the right to wages during sickness could only affect that minority of seamen who serve on Indian registered ships is unfortunate but should not prevent the improvement of the protection of that minority for which the Government of India are responsible. The mere amendment of the Indian Act in this particular would surely strengthen the claim of the Government of India for a similar improvement in the lot of Indian seamen employed on ships registered outside India.

As regards both medical assistance and wages, consideration should be given to the possibility not only of amending the Indian Act as it applies to seamen serving on Indian registered ships, but also to the incorporation of similar amendments in the agreements under which Indian seamen serve on ships registered outside India.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS

The effect of occupational work on children and young persons is attended by consequences which are harmful to the individual and the community. This is particularly so in the case of shipping industry which requires strenuous work. Hence it is the duty of every State to enact laws abolishing the employment of children at sea and regulating the conditions of work of young persons on board ship. Having considered the importance of this problem, the International Labour Organization has so far adopted four Conventions on the subject. These Conventions are:

(1) The Minimum Age (Sea) Convention, 1920; (2) The Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention, 1921; (3) The Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921; (4) The Revision of the Minimum Age (Sea) Convention, 1936.

The first Convention of minimum age adopted in 1920 recommended that children under the age of 14 years should not be employed or work on vessels other than vessels on which only members of the same family are employed. The Convention did not apply to work done by children on school-ships or training-ships, provided that such work was approved and supervised by public authority. This Convention was recommended by the Indian Legislature for ratification on September 26, 1921, subject to two reservations: (a) that it should apply only to foreign-going ships and to home-trade

ships of a burden exceeding 300 tons; and (b) that nothing in the draft Convention should be deemed to interfere with the Indian custom of sending young boys at sea on nominal wages in the charge of their fathers or near relatives.[15]

It is unfortunate that these reservations were accepted by the Indian Legislature. The Government members in the Assembly were mainly responsible for it. The first reservation restricts the scope of the Convention, which is not desirable in the interest of the children employed at sea. Explaining the reason why the reservation was necessary, the Government spokesman in the Assembly maintained that, as agreements with seamen engaged to serve on home-trade ships of a burden not exceeding 300 tons are not obligatory, it would be difficult to enforce the Convention in the case of these ships. He added that it was wrong on principle to ratify a Convention in a form in which the Government could not undertake fully to enforce it.[16] This argument is quite untenable on the face of it, in view of the fact that it is quite possible fully to enforce the provisions of the Convention in the case of all ships, if the Government only cares to make agreements with seamen obligatory on all ships instead of restricting them to only bigger ships. This can be easily done by amending the Indian Merchant Shipping Act so as to include all home-trade ships within its scope.

15 *Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 26, 1921, p. 1027.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 1028.

The second reservation is said to be necessary to safeguard the existing practice, whereby sea-cunnies, serangs, tindals and other ratings are accustomed to take with them on board ships their young sons or relatives to work as apprentices on nominal wages. Though this custom is desirable both in the interest of the seafaring population and the industry, the term 'near relative' included in the reservation clause is rather vague and hence is liable to be abused. Such a term is capable of being interpreted in a broad sense in India. Among the Hindus, even a kinsman can come within the term 'near relative.' It is, therefore, necessary that the term 'near relative' should be defined so as to include only the members of the same family or be deleted. Even this partial application of the Convention which was adopted in 1921 was not given effect to by the Government till 1931.

The Convention fixing the minimum age of admission of young persons to employment as trimmers or stokers, which was adopted in 1921, provides that young persons under the age of 18 years should not be employed for work on vessels as trimmers or stokers. This provision does not apply to (a) work done by young persons on school-ships or training-ships, provided that such work is approved and supervised by public authority; (b) to the employment of young persons on vessels mainly propelled by other means than steam; (c) to the young persons of not less than sixteen years of age, who, if found physically fit after medical exami-

nation, may be employed as trimmers or stokers on vessels exclusively engaged in the coastal trade of India and Japan, subject to regulations made after consultation with the most representative organisations of employers and workers in those countries. The Convention also lays down that when a trimmer or stoker is required in a port where young persons of less than eighteen years of age only are available, such young persons may be employed and in that case it should be necessary to engage two young persons in place of the trimmer or stoker required. Such young persons should be at least sixteen years of age. It is gratifying to note that this Convention has been ratified by the Government of India and has been embodied in Section 37C of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act. But the fact that ratification was given effect to as late as 1931 should be borne in mind.

The Convention concerning the compulsory medical examination of children and young persons employed at sea, which was adopted in 1921, provides that "the employment of any child or young person under eighteen years of age on any vessel, other than vessels upon which only members of the same family are employed, shall be conditional on the production of a medical certificate attesting fitness for such work, signed by a doctor who shall be approved by competent authority." It also provides that "the continued employment at sea of any such child or young person shall be subject to the repetition of such medical examination at intervals of not more than one year, and the production, after each

such examination, of a further medical certificate attesting fitness for such work. Should a medical certificate expire in the course of a voyage, it shall remain in force until the end of the said voyage." The Convention has been ratified by India and was given effect to in 1931, the necessary provisions being incorporated in Section 37D of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act.

The I. L. Conference further adopted a Convention in 1936 revising the Minimum Age Convention of 1920. Under the revised Convention, the minimum age of employment at sea has been raised from 14 to 15 years. As already shown, the Government of India have not yet fully ratified the Minimum Age Convention adopted in 1920, but steps were taken to amend the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, so as to accept the prescriptions of the Convention subject to the two reservations mentioned above. The Government of India propose to raise the minimum age of employment from 14 to 15 years.[17] But it is very unfortunate that they do not intend to ratify the Convention, as they want the reservations to continue.

[17] See *Ibid.*, October 1, 1937, p. 2859.

CHAPTER VIII

HOUSING

The problem of housing the working class population in cities has become very acute in India as a result of rapid industrialisation. This is especially so in the case of seamen owing to the concentration and tremendous growth of population in all the three great ports of Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi. Bombay, with a population of over 1,161,000 and a density of 48,000 persons per mile, has shown an increase of 50 per cent. in her population since 1881. Calcutta with Howrah, with a population of over 1,485,000 and a density of 24,354 persons per mile, has increased her population by 79 per cent. since 1881. Karachi, which has a population of over 263,000 and a density of 6,720 persons per mile, has shown an increase of 258 per cent. in her population. These figures are sufficient to indicate the extent of overcrowding in each of the ports. A large number of seamen have to spend lengthy periods in these ports awaiting employment. This naturally raises the important problem of securing living accommodation for these men. The object of this chapter is to describe the present conditions under which the seafaring population lives in these ports and to make suggestions for the improvement of their dwellings.

1. HOUSING IN BOMBAY

Though the exact number of unemployed seamen

living in Bombay at a time is not available, there is evidence to show that their number is in the neighbourhood of ten thousand on a modest estimate. According to the Census Report of 1931, there are over 14,000 persons in the city, who are classified under the head "ship-owners, boat-owners and their employees, mariners, etc."[1] As most of these are undoubtedly seamen, it is safe to presume that they are at least ten thousand in number.

Few statistics regarding the housing conditions of seamen in Bombay are available But sufficient information about the general state of housing of industrial workers in the city is obtainable. This material, though not directly related to seamen, is of much value in order to get an idea of the housing conditions of seamen as well. For the problem of housing in Bombay presents many features which are common to all workers irrespective of the industry to which they belong.

Bombay is the most over-crowded city in India. More than 15,000 persons live in rooms occupied by 20 persons or over each. The number of persons living in rooms occupied by 10 to 19 persons each is over 80,000, while the number of those living in rooms containing from six to nine persons each is more than 256,000.[2] It is stated that 86 per cent. of Bombay's population is housed so inadequately that the streets have to be used universally to supplement the sleeping accom-

[1] *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. IX, p. 197.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

modation which the houses themselves cannot provide.[3] In the words of the Superintendent of Census Operations, "Such conditions must be more reminiscent of the "Black Hole" of historical memory than of any modern city pretending to sanitary living conditions."[4] The Bombay Labour Office investigation further shows that 97 per cent. of the working class population live in one-room tenements with as many as 6 to 9 persons living in one room.[5] The position with regard to seamen must be equally bad, if not worse, in view of the fact that they are among the poorest labourers in the city. The Census Report says that if the figures for one-room tenements be considered, the sections of the city showing the worst overcrowding are Mazagaon and Kumbharwada, the localities where many of the seamen live.[6]

The dwellings of seamen in Bombay can be classified under three heads: (a) *Coods*, the lodging houses of the saloon crew; (b) *Lattis*, where seamen belonging to the deck and the engine-room departments, excepting the Punjabi seamen, live; (c) and *Deras*, the lodging houses occupied by the Punjabi seafarers, mostly firemen.

Coods: The Goan seamen, who come from Goa which is a Portuguese territory on the Western Sea Coast and who are employed as saloon workers, live in their lodging houses or clubs known as *coods*. Literally

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 89.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[5] See *R. C. L. I.*, *Report*, p. 270.
[6] *Census Report*, 1931, Vol. IX, p. 89.

speaking, *cood* in Konkani means a room. The members of each *cood* must belong to a particular village in Goa and must be Roman Catholics by religion. Thus a person belonging to one village in Goa cannot be admitted as member in a *cood* which is meant for those coming from another village. But there may be *coods* which are meant for persons coming from a group of villages. Among the members are seamen as well as persons employed in other occupations and industries. Men in search of employment are also admitted. A few students may be found in some clubs. But most of the members are manual labourers. Seamen predominate in many coods. Next to seamen are tailors. One great characteristic of these *coods* is that women are not allowed to stay in them. In fact the *cood* organisation is meant only for those who cannot or do not live with their families in Bombay.

There are nearly three hundred *coods* in Bombay. A great majority of them in which seamen dwell are in Mazagaon and Dhobi Talao. Some of the clubs are very big occupying a whole building and paying a monthly rent ranging from about Rs. 400 to Rs. 600, and having a membership of over 200 or 300 on their rolls. Generally the buildings of clubs contain halls and not small rooms. The space that is usually occupied by a person is a small share of the hall, where he keeps his wooden box. The number of such boxes is generally a sure indication of the number of members present in the club. Thus the Goan seaman's "home" in Bombay is

no more than a small place where he keeps his box containing his clothes. The wooden box serves him as his cot during night. In some clubs owing to lack of sufficient space, four to five rows of boxes are often kept one on the other, and the inmates sleep on the floor.

The clubs are run on co-operative lines, and there is no profiteering. The bond of unity among the members is very strong, as all of them belong to one village or a group of villages. Some *coods* have even death benefit schemes. In fact the *coods* are communal organisations whose only aim is mutual help and common benefit of their members. The objects for which some of these clubs are established are very wide. For instance, the Articles of Association of the Head Club of Cuncolim say:—

"The Club is founded with the following objects: (a) to promote unity and mutual assistance among the members; (b) to maintain premises in which members may reside; (c) to promote, organise and conduct Provident Schemes for the benefit of deceased members' families by payment at death of a fixed sum of money not exceeding Rs. 500; (d) to promote, organize and maintain other schemes of mutual benefit or other purpose; (e) to co-operate with other Goan clubs or institutions for the promotion of the interests, social, moral or economic of the members."

The monthly rent or contribution a seaman living in a *cood* has to pay ranges between Re. 1 and Rs. 3.

In some clubs it is not always compulsory for a member to stay in the club. But he is under an obligation to pay a fraction of his rent when he stays outside the premises but in Bombay. This fraction is generally one-half of the rental amount. Similarly, members who are employed on board ship have to pay half the rent. With a view to showing some consideration to the unemployed, the usual rule is that members who proceed to Goa are exempt from the monthly contribution during the period of their stay in Goa. But a member, even though unemployed, is required to pay the full contribution when he actually resides in the club.

Boarding is optional in the *coods*. Even those who take their meals in clubs have to pay cash daily for them. In some clubs there is provision made for tea in the morning and the afternoon. Members are required to pay separately for tea. On enquiries I found that the charges for a meal prepared in the club varies from one anna and three pice to two annas. Thus the monthly charges roughly amount to from Rs. 5 to Rs. 8. The food generally consists of rice and fish or mutton curry. The fact that the monthly charges for two meals a day vary from Rs. 5 to Rs. 8 in a city like Bombay, where the cost of living is very high, is a clear indication of the very poor nature of the diet both in quality and quantity. I have seen many Goan seamen who are compelled to remain half-starved, owing to unemployment.

From the point of view of sanitation and ventilation, the condition of the *coods* is far from satisfactory.

This is particularly true in the case of those clubs which are situated in lanes and bye-lanes in the Thakurdwar and Dhobi Talao areas. Not a ray of light penetrates many clubs. The passages of entrance are generally bad-smelling, dirty and dark. Personal inspection of some of the *coods* leaves unpleasant memories which cannot be readily forgotton.

In spite of their utter poverty and bad conditions of life, it must be said to the credit of Goan seamen that they are running their *cood* organisations efficiently. The *cood* is a perfectly democratic institution. Its management is vested in a manager and a secretary together with a committee consisting of certain members, all of whom are elected annually. This Board of Management appoints on every Sunday a steward in rotation from amongst the members of the club. The functions of the steward generally are: (a) to inspect daily the premises of the club and to be responsible for the general maintenance of cleanliness; (b) to be in charge of the club's safe and documents and to keep the keys of the club's safe during the week; (c) to collect daily money due for food supply and to be responsible for the mess during the week. Every club holds its meeting on a fixed Sunday every month for the purpose of collecting monthly rents and contributions and for transacting the ordinary business of the club. The transactions of the monthly meetings are binding on all members whether they are resident in the club or not. As the Sunday on which the meeting is to be held is fixed once for all, the

meeting does not require any formal notice. The ringing of the club bell is the indication that the meeting is in session.

The *cood* organisation is a great boon to Goan seamen, but for which their condition would have been still worse. It imbues them with a spirit of co-operation and self-help; above all it affords them ample opportunities to manage their affairs according to their own light and experience.

Lattis: The lodging houses of the deck and engine-room crews excepting the Punjabi seamen, are called *lattis*. These may be divided under three heads, namely (a) *Lattis* of the Kharwas; (b) *Lattis* of the Konkani Mohmedans; and (c) *Lattis* of other Mussalmans.

Lattis are chiefly to be found in the areas of Dongri, Kumbharwada, Khara Talao, Mazgaon and New Nagpada, some of which are the most densely populated parts of the city. Thus Kumbharwada has a density of over 727 per acre and New Nagpada of over 636.[7] The conditions under which the occupants of the *lattis* live are most revolting. The dwellings are invariably dark, dismal and unhealthy, and often permeated with bad smell. They are much worse than the *coods* of Goan seamen. The accommodation provided for each inmate is so small that all of them cannot sleep inside. Hence many are compelled to rest in the streets outside the dwellings during night. Usually there are no windows

7 *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. IX, p. 10.

to the dwellings, the only source of light being the door. Wherever there is a small window, it opens on to the *gully* which is full of filth and offensive smell. Hence the windows have to be kept closed to shut out the stench. The seamen's *lattis* are among the most insanitary houses in the city. They smack more of warehousing than housing. No matter how vivid a description is given of existing conditions, it is impossible to convey any true idea of the actual state of affairs.

The *lattis* are private concerns. The usual monthly rent per head varies from Re. 1 to Rs. 2. In most of the *lattis* only lodging accommodation is provided, and each man makes his own arrangement for his meals outside. Only in some *lattis* meals are prepared and the expenses are divided among the members. This is possible when the members come from the same village or know one another intimately. Thus, in the *lattis* occupied by the Kharwas, meals are generally supplied. The average monthly expenses of food per head come to between Rs. 5 and Rs. 7. The diet of the Kharwas appears to be poorer than that of the Goans. In a few *lattis* occupied by the Konkani Mussalmans also, meals are supplied. The food charges come to between Rs. 7 and Rs. 10 per month. The *lattis* occupied by other Muslims do not provide meals. The inmates include Mahomedan seamen from Bombay itself and from Malabar, South Kanara and Bengal as well as those from Muscat and other places.

Deras: The Punjabi lodging houses which are called

deras are chiefly to be found in Kamatipura, one of the most overcrowded parts of the city. They are mostly occupied by firemen, and are conducted privately. They are the worst among the seamen's dwellings. The accommodation each man gets is so inadequate that most of the men sit in groups in courtyards of the chawls, at street corners and on footpaths and at night sleep on *charpoys* placed on footpaths or at roadsides. The surroundings are the most insanitary. The *deras* are so dirty and the atmosphere in them so repulsive as to compel a hurried exit. The Seamen's Recruitment Committee appointed by the Government of India and presided over by Mr. A. G. (now Sir Andrew) Clow, a member of the Indian Civil Service, is understood to have condemned these *deras* as cramped and insanitary. Much the same thing has been admitted by Mr. G. E. Bennett, the Chairman of the Indian Sailors' Home Society, when he says that seamen in Bombay "are dependent on squalid and crowded lodgings where they live in very insanitary and sordid conditions."[8] It is a pity that each man who is supposed to occupy a dark hole in the *dera* has to pay a monthly rent of about Re. 1. There are no boarding arrangements in the *deras*, the seamen taking their meals in hotels. The food charges come to between Rs. 8 and Rs. 9 per month.

The Indian Sailors' Home: The only provision so far made by the State for securing living accommo-

[8] *Sixth Annual Report of the Indian Sailors' Home Society*, p. 19.

dation for seamen in Bombay is the Indian Sailors' Home, the history of which may be briefly given as follows:

The Home is the outcome of lengthy consultation between the Government of India and the Government of Bombay as the most suitable way of perpetuating the memory of Indian seamen who lost their lives in the Great War. The project was approved as long ago as 1922, but it was not until 1927 that active steps were taken to carry it out. The site on which the Home stands is situated near the docks. The land was presented by the Port Trust as its contribution towards the capital cost of the scheme. The amount required to raise the building was obtained from various sources. Some years ago the Prince of Wales Seamen's Institute (now merged in the Royal Bombay Seamen's Society) had received and funded for a future Lascars' Home donations amounting to about Rs. 40,000 from various Indian donors. This fund was supplemented from time to to time by further donations and interest accruals and also by sums allotted by the Government of India out of the Sunday Penalty Fees collected by the Customs Department. In the year 1927 the Royal Alfred Sailors' Home, prior to its amalgamation with the Seamen's Institute, decided to earmark for the capital cost of the future Indian Sailors' Home a sum of Rs. 1,00,000 out of the sale proceeds of its buildings taken over by Government. The Government of India contributed a sum of

Rs. 88,000, and the Government of Bombay Rs. 10,000. These amounts were available for covering the cost of the building. The Home was completed at a total cost of Rs. 2,69,000, and was opened on December 16, 1931. In 1936 a small extension was added at a cost of Rs. 26,000.

On the wall of the Memorial Hall of the Home runs the following inscription:

"Here are recorded in lasting honour and remembrance the names of 2,223 seamen of the Royal Navy, Royal Indian Marine and the Merchant Navy, who fell in the Great War and whose grave is the sea."

The primary object of the Home is to provide free living accommodation for all those classes of Indian seamen who have to spend lengthy periods in Bombay awaiting re-employment The Home can give shelter to about 450 seamen at one time. Considering the vast floating population of Indian seamen in the city of Bombay, it must be admitted that the extent of accommodation which the Home provides at present is quite inadequate. It is, therefore, necessary that an additional Home should be erected so as to make provision for at least a thousand seamen at one time. This should not be difficult if the Government of India, the Government of Bombay, the Port Trust, the Municipal Corporation, and the various shipping companies contribute towards the capital cost of the new additional Home.

The management of the Home is vested in a

committee of twelve. They include the Shipping Master, a representative of the Government of India and a representative of the Bombay Government. Thus the interests of Governments are represented by two members on the Committee. The shipowners and merchants have two representatives, one appointed by the Indian Merchants' Chamber and the other by the Bombay Chamber of Commerce. The Bombay Port Trust has one representative. Provision is also made for the election of four members of the Committee, two by the members of the Indian Sailors' Home Society and two by the Patrons, i. e., individual subscribers of Rs. 50 per annum or above and firms or companies subscribing Rs. 500 or more per annum. Thus four members representing the general public interested in the welfare of seamen sit on the Committee. Regarding seamen's representation, there are only two members, one appointed by the Royal Bombay Seamen's Society and the other nominated by the Government of India as representing Indian seamen.

It is important to note that the so-called representative of Indian seamen is nominated by the Government of India and not elected by Indian seamen. This is not only unfair to Indian seamen, but also humiliating. While every other member on the Committee is the real spokesman of the interest which he represents, the same cannot be said of the member who is supposed to represent Indian seamen, because of his being a non-elected member. If the Government believe that Indian seamen as a class are not yet fit for exercising the right of election, they are

not only mistaken in their belief, but are also doing an injustic to their own nationals. The position is all the more surprising in view of the fact that even foreign seamen, through the Royal Bombay Seamen's Society, are given the right of election for sending a member to the Committee. This is only one more illustration of the policy of racial discrimination consistently followed in most matters relating to Indian seamen. Under the new Government of India Act, 1935, Indian labour including seamen enjoy the right of sending their own elected representatives to the Provincial and Federal Legislatures. It is strange that the same principle is not applied in the case of the Indian Sailors' Home.

Secondly, the representation of Indian seamen should be increased on the Committee. There should be at least three members representing Indian seamen and they should be elected through the seamen's trade union organisation. Really speaking, the complete management of the Home should be in the hands of seamen through their trusted representatives. Then only the inmates will feel the atmosphere of freedom and joy in the Home. As truly observed by the British Trade Union Congress Delegation to India, "Welfare work has its uses, provided always that it is completely controlled by the workers themselves."[9] With this ultimate end in view, seamen's representation on the Committee should be immediately raised to three at least as a first step in the right direction.

[9] *Report on Labour Conditions in India*, p. 12.

2. HOUSING IN CALCUTTA AND KARACHI

The housing conditions of seamen at the port of Calcutta are almost similar to those of their Bombay comrades. They live in boarding houses called *lattis* which are owned and managed by private individuals. The accommodation each man gets in the *latti* is very small. They generally live in the *latti* like herrings in a barrel. It is a general complaint that the sanitary arrangements regarding latrines, drinking water, bathing and washing in lodging houses, though made according to the requirements of the municipal law, cannot be fully utilized by seamen owing to overcrowding. The Commerce Department of the Government of India described the lodging houses of Calcutta seamen as "dark, damp and unhealthy looking."[10] Thus the problem of housing seamen in Calcutta is completely neglected by the Government, the Municipality and the Port Trust. These bodies have done nothing so far. And yet, the Calcutta Improvement Trust was created primarily to help the poor by providing them with cheap and healthy lodgings.

It is to be regretted that there does not exist even a Sailors' Home for seamen in Calcutta despite the fact that it is the largest recruiting port in India. As mentioned above, a Sailors' Home as a memorial to the sacrifice of Indian seamen during the Great War was erected in Bombay. The need for such a Home in Calcutta was

[10] *R. C. L. I.*, ***Evidence***, Vol. II, Part I, p. 329.

as great as it was in Bombay. On the proposal by the Government in 1920 to erect a memorial to Calcutta seamen who lost their lives in the Great War, the Indian Seamen's Union, Calcutta, represented that the erection of a Sailors' Home, instead of a bare monument of brick and mortor, would serve the double purpose of immortalising the brave seamen and of partially solving their housing problem. But the Union's representation was not paid any heed to by the Government and the Home was not erected.

The housing conditions in Karachi also are very unsatisfactory. This is evident from the following description culled from the memoradum submitted by the Indian Seamen's Union of Karachi to the Royal Commission on Labour:

"There exist no housing arrangements for the seamen. They live mostly in mat huts on payment of Re. 1 per annum. Their employers live 6,000 miles away and consequently have done nothing for them. Their sanitary conditions are far from desirable. All the epidemics that have broken out, start from there. The only housing arrangements made for them by a local body, are the 800 houses built by the Port Trust at Keamari. The rent of each house is Rs. 5 per month. This falls heavily on them. On every Tuesday, when the court is held at Keamari, one finds plenty of cases arising out of the failure to pay rent. Recently, the rent of the houses has been enhanced by Re. 1. This means an additional source of hardship for the poor people. Many of them

have left these houses and have gone back to their old mat huts."[11]

The establishment of Sailors' Homes alone will not solve the problem of housing. The Sailors' Homes can provide accommodation only to those seamen who require temporary shelter in ports. Seamen cannot stay in them with their families. Hence it is necessary that separate living quarters, with nominal rent, should be provided in Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi for the benefit of those who desire to live in these ports with their families. It is this lack of family life in the ports that often drives Indian seamen to prostitutes and thus gives rise to grave social evils, including the spread of venereal disease.

3. COMPARISON WITH OTHER INDUSTRIES

Though seamen form an important section of the Indian labour population, their problems are not receiving even that little attention which the workers on shore are receiving at the hands of the Government, public bodies and employers. This is particularly true in regard to the problem of housing. Some provision, though not adequate, has been made by employers for housing the Indian working class population belonging to important industries; but nothing has been done for seamen.

In this connection, it would be of some interest to know the extent of progress made in housing the working

[11] *Ibid.*, *Evidence*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 232.

class population in India, so that one may know where exactly seamen stand in this respect in contrast to their comrades in other industries.

A great majority of plantation workers and a considerable number of mining and factory labourers in India are housed by their employers. By 1929–30, for instance, 22 cotton-mill owners supplied housing to 20 per cent. of their workers in Bombay City, 53 jute-mill owners had built 41,000 houses accommodating 131,000 or between 30 and 40 per cent. of their workers in Calcutta and the vicinity, and 35 cotton mills provided houses for 16 per cent. of their workers in Ahmedabad. The Tata Iron and Steel Company have built 6,285 houses for their workers; about one-fourth of the factories in the United Provinces had built 5,400 single rooms and 1,045 double rooms in the course of the three years from 1931 to 1933; and 226 factories in Madras had provided housing accommodation for their workers by 1936. By 1935, nearly 50 per cent. of the perennial factories in the Punjab had provided quarters for most of the permanent staff, and many of the larger mills aimed at accommodating all their workers.[12] Similarly, the railways provide housing accommodation for a considerable number of their workers.

Compare this progress in housing with the provision made by shipping companies to house Indian seamen. There does not exist even a single quarter constructed either

[12] *Industrial Labour in India*, I. L. O., P. 297.

by the shipping companies or by the State, though the number of Indian seamen is more than two lakhs. The Royal Commission on Labour in India reported that employers had realised the necessity for housing labour and had carried out the great majority of housing schemes so far put into operation. But shipowners are an exception to this.

4. THE STATE AND HOUSING

Housing by employers has a serious disadvantage. It makes workers more dependent on their employers. It results in loss of liberty of action, and exposes the worker to the danger of ejection in the event of a strike, industrial dispute or dismissal. It is, therefore, true to say that housing by employers should not be encouraged on this ground. But this difficulty can be got over if the State makes it illegal on the part of employers to eject workers during a strike or trade dispute. It may be further argued that the introduction of such a law will discourage building activity by employers and will result in insufficient living accommodation for workers. There is some force in this argument. Hence the position demands that the State should come forward with its own schemes of providing housing for industrial labour and make it obligatory on employers to share a fixed proportion of the cost of the schemes. Since the public are also concerned with the problem of industrial housing, local bodies and Improvement Trusts should be made liable to share the financial bur-

den of the schemes with the Government and the employers. In addition, these bodies should be made responsible for the proper development and lay-out of industrial areas and for the provision and maintenance of proper sanitary conditions. If the State takes the initiative and moves in the matter in right earnest, as it should, employers will have no other alternative but to obey the commands of the State. As the Royal Commission on Labour observed, the fact that many employers in the past have provided housing to their workers suggests that in future also they will continue to do the same. What is really required is that the State should undertake the direct responsibility of housing the workers and compel the local bodies and employers to share the cost.

This method should succeed at least in so far as the problem of housing Indian seamen is concerned. As we have seen, maritime labour in India is practically confined to the ports of Calcutta and Bombay. Both these cities have Improvement Trusts (in the case of the latter city the Improvement Trust has been taken over by the Municipal Corporation and the affairs are managed by a Committee called the Improvements Committee) which are provided with full powers to acquire land for the purpose of preparing new areas for housing schemes. In fact, the Trusts were and are primarily meant to construct cheap and decent dwellings for the working classes. Some of the shipping companies employing Indian seamen are among the richest

shipowners, particularly the P. & O. and B. I. Companies which together absorb a great majority of Indian seamen. It is for the Government of India to make these companies pay at least a portion of the cost of the housing schemes by imposing on them an additional tax in proportion to the number of seamen each company employs. Similarly, the Port Trusts of Bombay and Calcutta should be asked to contribute their quota. In view of the fact that the very prosperity of the Port Trusts entirely depends on trade and commerce which in turn is carried on with the help of seamen, it is the duty of the Port Trusts to spend a portion of their income towards the welfare of seamen belonging to their ports. Thus, the problem of housing seamen in ports can be solved without much difficulty within a reasonable period of time, if the State undertakes to launch housing schemes in co-operation with the shipping companies, the Improvement Trusts and the Port Trusts.

CHAPTER IX

WELFARE WORK

Welfare work is of particular importance to the seaman who may be called the vagrant of the sea. If anybody needs recreation most, it is the sailor for whom the family is more than a memory than a reality. His life on the sea makes it impossible for him to enjoy the benefits of social institutions which exist for workers on shore. A seaman engaged on deep sea is like a prisoner, being confined to his ship. Whenever occasionally he gets a chance to be on shore for a few hours or a couple of days during his long voyage, he requires some respite from his nomadic life. Hence the necessity of providing him with adequate facilities for recreation in all large ports.

1. RECREATION

For a maritime country like India, with so many seamen employed on ships, it is of the greatest importance that the best possible provision should be made for the recreation of seamen during their stay in their home ports. But an examination of the existing facilities for recreation in Indian ports would show that this problem is completely neglected by the Government of India and the Local Governments of the maritime provinces.

As mentioned in the last chapter, there exists a Sailors' Home for Indian seamen in Bombay. Though the primary object of this Home is to provide free living accommodation, the Home is also expected to provide a centre for recreation and amusement to the inmates. But a perusal of the annual reports of the Indian Sailors' Home Society would show that practically no facilities for recreation exist in the Home. Since the establishment of the Home in 1931, only a paltry sum of about Rs. 800 was spent for providing entertainments to as many as 16,757 seamen who were admitted to the Home during these years. This is evident from the following figures :[1]

Year	Rs.	a.	p.	Total Admissions
1932	32	0	0	1,300
1933	41	12	0	1,953
1934	617	12	6	2,153
1935	68	15	0	2,158
1936	not mentioned			2,739
1937	78	3	3	3,039
1938	Nil			3,415
	838	10	9	16,757

This works out at less than an anna per head. It should be carefully noted that even this paltry sum includes the expenses for the night class and lectures. This neglect on the part of the authorities of the Home

[1] Compiled from the *Annual Reports of the Indian Sailors' Home Society.*

in providing entertainments to the inmates cannot escape severe criticism. This is particularly so when we take into consideration the fact that the annual statement of income and expenditure of the Home shows a decent surplus every year. During the last seven years the Home was able to build a surplus of more than Rs. 50,000, as can be seen from the following figures:[2]

Year	Rs. (In Round Figures)
1932	8,400
1933	11,000
1934	9,200
1935	9,200
1936	6,400
1937	5,900
1938	4,600
	54,700

It is really strange that such a state of affairs is allowed to continue in spite of the fact that seamen in Bombay are in great need of entertainments of every kind.

The following details from the Annual Report for 1937 may be found interesting: Only two cinema shows were arranged during the year 1937. One lecture was organised. A wireless set was in service. Carrom was the only indoor game that was provided for. The

[2] Compiled from the *Annual Reports of the Indian Sailors' Home Society.*

gymnastic apparatus consisted of parallel bars, rings and a sand pit. This exhausts all forms and items of recreation available in the Home.

Compare this state of things with the facilities for recreation provided at the Royal Bombay Seamen's Society which is used by European seamen. According to the Annual Report for 1937, the Society spent an amount of Rs. 4,183 on entertainments during the year. Dances and socials were held on every Wednesday and Friday, at which refreshments were served free. Eighty-four foot-ball matches, 30 cricket matches and 16 picnics were arranged. A badminton gear was provided free, and games could be played on all days except on Sundays. Boxing tournaments were arranged as desired by the inmates. Billiard tables were also available, two for officers and three for seamen.

It logically follows from what has been stated above that the Indian Sailors' Home in Bombay cannot be called a place of recreation. A Seamen's Home should be a centre of social activity where the inmates can pass their time pleasantly and profitably.

It is a common complaint from seamen that the Indian Sailors' Home at Bombay is like a prison. They feel that the atmosphere there is one of dependence, helplessness and gloom, and not of joy and freedom. This sort of feeling is to a great extent due to the severe discipline to which the inmates are subjected to. The peculiar difficulties of seafarers and their particular ways of life, which arise out of the very nature of their call-

ing, are not fully appreciated by the Management of the Home including the Superintendent. The discontent among the inmates has grown so acute in recent years that all of them left the Home in December 1935 as a protest against ill-treatment by the Superintendent. The inmates re-entered the Home after ten days when an assurance was given to them by the authorities of the Home that they would receive proper treatment in future. A similar incident occurred in February 1939, when the Superintendent was reported to have assaulted an inmate.[3]

Coming to Calcutta, we find that no facilities for the recreation of Indian seamen are provided in that port. It is true that there exists the Seamen's Welfare Association; but the Association has all along been attending to the needs only of European seamen, despite the fact that the constitution of the Association provides for welfare work amongst all classes of seamen. This is to be greatly regretted especially in view of the fact that the Association is receiving a grant from the Calcutta Port Commissioners as well as from the Government of India and the Government of Bengal. That no special facilities for the recreation of Indian seamen exist in a port of the size and importance of Calcutta is a matter for keen regret.

It will not be out of place to mention here what is being done in Great Britain for providing recreation to

[3] See *The Bombay Sentinel*, February 15, 1939.

seamen so that the contrast between the facilities available there with those in Indian ports can be clearly brought out. Sixty-nine institutions have been set up in English ports and sixty in foreign ports for the purpose of recreation by the Missions to Seamen ; and forty-seven institutions in English ports and sixty-seven in foreign ports have been created by the British Sailors' Society. Each of these contains reading and writing rooms, in addition to a supply of bedrooms which are sometimes luxurious such as those in the Memorial Hostel in London. Various amusements such as concerts, cinemas, dances, cricket, hockey, football, excursions and picnics are organised. The British Sailors' Society has a budget of £. 100,000 and possesses 20,000 libraries throughout the world.[4]

Seamen's institutions in England and other Western countries have given the main part of their attention to providing recreation, while this aspect of welfare activity is completely neglected in India as shown above. Experience in these countries has proved that the provision of recreation can do more than the application of regulations in keeping seamen away from places in which they would be exposed to danger.

Realising the importance of this subject, the International Labour Conference held at Geneva in 1936 recommended that " Arrangement should be made, at

[4] See *The Promotion of Seamen's Welfare in Port*, I. L. O , 1929, p. 15.

least in the larger ports, for the material and general assistance of seamen while in the port and such arrangements should more particularly include: (a) the institution or development of seamen's hostels of a satisfactory character and furnishing suitable board and lodging at reasonable prices; (b) the institution or development of institutes—which might be distinct from the seamen's hostels, but should keep as far as possible in touch with them—providing meeting and recreation rooms (canteens, rooms for games, libraries, etc.); (c) the organisation, where possible in co-operation with ships' sports clubs, of healthy recreations, such as sports, excursions, etc.; (d) the promotion, by every possible means, of the family life of seamen."

2. GENERAL EDUCATION

Every observer of Indian industry is agreed that its greatest handicap is the illiteracy of the workers. This applies to seamen also. In the words of the Royal Commission, "In India nearly the whole mass of industrial labour is illiterate, a state of affairs which is unknown in any other country of industrial importance. It is impossible to overestimate the consequences of this disability, which are obvious in wages, in health, in productivity, in organisation and in several other directions."[5] It is, therefore, essential that special efforts should be made to make workers literate in every

[5] *R. C. L. I.*, *Report*, p. 27.

industry. As regards seamen, this responsibilty should be shared between the Government and the shipping companies. The shipowners would do well to realise that to provide literacy to seamen is the sound economic investment because money invested in it gives a return in greater efficiency on the part of workers. Special literacy classes for the benefit of Indian seamen should be organised in the ports of Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi. But the starting of such classes alone will not be of much use unless teaching in them is made attractive and interesting. Proper methods of approach to adults will have to be adopted. Again, the subject-matter of the lessons should have a direct relation with the day-to-day problems facing seafarers. Also magic lantern slides, charts, pictures, etc. will have to be used in order to make the class interesting. In short, teaching should be accompanied by recreation so that the seaman is not bored by the teacher. The fact that literacy classes with conventional methods of teaching do not attract seamen is established by experience. For instance, the progress so far made by the literacy class in the Indian Sailors' Home at Bombay is not at all satisfactory. This class was started in 1932, during which year the average number of students on the roll was 22. Since then the number of students has decreased instead of increasing, as is evident from the following figures :[6]

[6] Compiled from the *Annual Reports of the Indian Sailors' Home Society.*

Year	Average number of students	Average daily attendance
1932	22	12.5
1933	21.8	11
1934	20.75	12.3
1935	19	13.9
1936	17.8	14.3
1937	15.2	10.4
1938	16	10.6

If proper methods of approach to the adult mind are adopted, literacy classes for seamen are bound to show satisfactory results.

Along with the starting of literacy classes for illiterate seamen, adoption of measures for the maintenance of literacy is also essential. The capacity of the adult to read should be developed into a habit of reading after he leaves the class. This can be secured by providing seamen with books written in simple language and containing matter that would interest the seafarer. Every important port should have a Seamen's Home where such books are made available. A system of libraries on board ship containing books in Indian languages should also be established, as is done in Great Britain and other maritime countries.

In Great Britain, in 1919 a Seafarers' Education Service was set up with a view to creating libraries on a systematic basis. The Service was supported by the shipowners who met the original expenditure and provided for the maintenance of libraries on ships. In this way the Service organised libraries for the crews of 363 vessels

of all kinds—passenger and cargo—belonging to 34 companies. There were in 1929 six libraries in coast institutions, with a total of 54,000 volumes, most of which were on board ship. The budget of the Service during the same year amounted to £. 6,000 which was partly met by contributions from the shipowners.[7] But the same British shipowners, who have helped the establishment of these libraries, have done nothing for providing books in Indian languages for the benefit of Indian seamen, most of whom are employed on British ships.

In addition to literacy in their mother tongue, a working knowledge of English is of special importance to seamen in view of the fact that English is an international language and that Indian seamen visit the ports of all nations in general and of the British Empire in particular. What is more, the members of the catering staff who serve the passengers on board ship can do their work more efficiently if they can speak and write English. In many companies, only those who can speak and write English are promoted as Butlers, Pantrymen and Head Waiters. It is, therefore, necessary that special arrangements should be made to teach English to seamen.

3. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

With a view to obtaining suitable Indian candidates for the Indian Mercantile Marine and training them in such a way that they may with confidence be expected

[7] *The Promotion of Seamen's Welfare in Port*, I. L. O., 1929, p. 15.

to follow the sea as a career, and be fit in all respects to hold their own as good and efficient officers, a scheme was launched by the Government of India in 1927. During the first year, thirty cadets specially selected from all parts of British India joined the "Dufferin" Training Ship at the Bombay Harbour.

The full course in the Training ship lasts for three years. Candidates must be British subjects, and must be between the ages of thirteen years eight months and sixteen years. The total number of entries in each year is limited to 50 cadets; 25 for the Executive Course and 25 for the Engineering Course. The training on the "Dufferin" ensures a grounding in the theoretical side of the profession and a sea sense which will assist the boy to determine whether a career at sea suits him. In view of the fact that not all who join the "Dufferin" may be able to proceed to sea and in order to allow for an element of competition in the Training Ship, in addition to vocational training, the curriculum has been so designed that it combines the requirements of the sea with those of the Universities in India upto the Matriculation standard. In fact, the "Dufferin" Passing Out Certificate has been recognised by the Government of India as equivalent to the Matriculation Examination for purposes of admission to the Public Services in India.

In order to assist those parents who are not in a position to pay the full fees to send their boys to the Training Ship, the Government of India have founded six scholarships, each of the value of a remission of half

fees, viz., Rs. 25 per month. These are tenable for three years, provided that the boy makes satisfactory progress. In addition, there is one scholarship of Rs. 25 per month granted by the Government of Bengal open to residents of that province; six scholarships by the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, two of the value of Rs. 400 each per year and the rest of the value of Rs. 200 each per year; two scholarships of Rs. 30 each per month by the Bombay Port Trust; two of the value of Rs. 360 per year by the Karachi Port Trust; one of Rs. 360 per year by the Karachi Municipal Corporation to be granted to sons of citizens of Karachi; three of the value of Rs. 40 per mensem each by the University of Madras to be awarded to the candidates who are residents of the Madras Presidency; and one of Rs. 320 per year by the G. I. P. Railway Staff Benefit Fund to be available only to the children of the G. I. P. Railway employees. Of the two scholarships to be granted by the Bombay Port Trust, one is to be awarded to a son or dependent of a Port Trust employee or ex-employee. Similarly, one of the Karachi Port Trust Scholarships is open only to the son of a Port Trust employee.

It is strange that not even a single scholarship is restricted to the sons of Indian seamen. As a class, Indian seamen are very poor and hence it is impossible for them to send their sons to the Training Ship unless scholarships are awarded to them. Moreover, sons of seamen have a better claim to be trained for a career at sea. Hence they should be awarded special scholarships

on the "Dufferin." It may be suggested that of the six scholarships to be granted by the Government of India, three should be open only to the sons of seamen and that they should be of Rs. 50 each per month in order to cover the full fees. Similarly, each Port Trust should found a special scholarship to be awarded to the sons of seamen. The Port Trust authorities should realise that seamen are the important agents in the prosperity of the ports and that they should receive their due share of benefits from them.

As the candidates on the "Dufferin" must be British Indian subjects, boys from Goa, Daman and Diu, which are Protuguese territories, cannot join the Training Ship. This has resulted in great injustice to the seafaring pupulation of Portuguese India. The saloon seamen of Goa and the Kharwa sailors of Daman and Diu have been playing an important role as seamen for more than a century, and have brought credit to India an efficient seafarers, and prosperity to British Indian ports. Along with other Indian seamen, they too have served the cause of the British Empire during the Great War with single-minded devotion. It seems rather a pity that their sons should now be prevented from joining the "Dufferin" on the mere technical ground that they are non-British subjects.

The granting of scholarships to the cadets on the "Dufferin" will not be of much use unless all the lads, after receiving their training, have a sea career open to them. Unfortunately there is a growing uncertainty

as regards the cadets obtaining employment as officers on ships. The information in the possession of the Government of India showed that at the beginning of the year 1937, the number of certified ex-cadets out of employment was six.[8] This uncertainty of employment is mainly due to the non-Indian Shipping companies either refusing to employ the cadets as officers or not employing them in adequate numbers. For instance, the British India Steam Navigation Co., Ltd., with its very large fleet of over 130 steamers, have so far employed only sixteen cadets as officers, while the P. & O. Company have been all along refusing to employ the Dufferin cadets. Only recently they have agreed to take only four cadets on their ships.[9] That the "Dufferin" cadets are not employed in adequate numbers by British companies is evident from the following table.[10]

British Companies		No. of Cadets
B. I. S. N. Company		16
Asiatic Steam Navigation Co.		5
Moghul Line		2
	British Total	23
Indian Companies		
Scindia Steam Navigation Co.		40
Bombay Steam Navigation Co.		1
Cowasji Dinshaw Brothers		1
Eastern Steam Navigation Co.		1
	Indian Total	43
	All	66

8 See *Lagislative Assembly Debates*, March 6, 1937, p. 1452.

9 *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 10, 1937, p. 1514.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 1512.

Having regard to the commercial and other monopolistic advantages enjoyed by the B. I. S. N. Company, the number employed by them is very unsatisfactory. The fact that the P. and O. Company, after so many years of flat refusal, have now agreed to employ only four "Dufferin" cadets is sufficiently indicative of their attitude in the matter of encouraging seafaring among Indians.

Unless the ships plying in Indian waters are compelled by the Government of India to employ a certain proportion of the "Dufferin" cadets, the problem of their securing jobs will become more serious and complicated. The only proper course would be that the Government of India should attach conditions for employing an adequate number of these cadets in connection with the subsidies given to the P. & O. and B. I. Companies for the carriage of mails. The imposition of such conditions on ships carrying mails is not unusual. More stringent conditions are imposed in other countries. Any further delay on the part of the Government to impose these conditions will adversely affect the future success of the Training Ship. It will defeat the very purpose for which the "Dufferin" was founded, and the formation of an Indian personnel for a sea career will be long delayed.

4. PROTECTION OF HEALTH

By the very nature of their employment, seamen form a special category of workers whose health has to

be specially protected. Owing to their wandering life and to the close proximity in which they live on board ship, seamen are specially liable to contract disease. Moreover, if they fall ill, it is difficult to ensure the necessary continuity in their treatment. Again, one of the great dangers to which seamen are exposed and which is a menace not only to their health but to that of their families is the venereal disease. This is due to the lack of family life among seamen, as their calling takes them away from their homes for a long time. It is, therefore, necessary that special facilities for the treatment and cure of venereal and other diseases among seamen should be made available in all principal ports. Unfortunately, an examination of the existing medical facilities in Indian ports would show that this aspect of public health has not received proper attention in India.

Bombay: Though Bombay can boast of many public hospitals, the fact is that the seamen in the City often fail to secure admission to them and to receive proper medical treatment. The result is intense suffering and often death. The following case recorded by Mr. M. A. Master of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company is a typical instance. On January 15, 1938, a seaman by name R. Abdul, who was in a bad state of health, was sent to the J. J. Hospital for admission and necessary treatment, on the recommendation of the Superintendent of the Indian Sailors' Home. He was asked to report himself on the 17th January. He reported on the 17th but was sent back on the plea "no room". He was

again taken to the same hospital in an ambulance on the 18th January, but was again refused admission. The poor fellow died on the 20th January 1938.[11]

A more scandalous state of affairs than this can hardly be imagined. To turn out a seaman on the ground of "no room" is particularly very hard, as he has generally no home in the city. It is worth remembering, in this connection, that the Nursing Association of the J. J. Hospital receives a substantial contribution from the Bombay Port Trust every year. The purpose of this contribution is that seamen should be admitted to the Hospital as indoor patients on the recommendation of the Superintendent of the Indian Sailors' Home. Further comment is needless.

Among the many public hospitals in Bombay, not even one of them admits Indian seamen as indoor patients for the treatment of venereal disease. The St. George Hospital, where adequate facilities for the treatment of venereal disease exist, does not admit Indian seamen as indoor patients, while European seamen are admitted. Even in the "Seamen's Dispensary" at Frere Road near the Alexandra Docks there is neither equipment nor staff to deal with the cases of venereal disease. Speaking about this dispensary, the Indian Delegation of the British Social Hygiene Council were of the opinion that "it is neither commodious enough nor in any way suitable to be made into a Venereal

[11] Letter dated March 2, 1938, from Mr. M. A. Master to the Secretary, Bombay Port Trust.

Disease Centre for members of the Mercantile Marine at the Port."[12]

The extent to which the problem of combating venereal disease among seamen is neglected in the port of Bombay, has been well described by the Delegation. They stated: "After visiting the Port of Bombay and the hospital centres available for treatment in the city, we are of opinion that adequate facilities maintained in accordance with the most advanced standards of scientific methods are not available for seamen visiting the Port of Bombay."[13] With regard to the attitude of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, the Delegation wrote: "We are of opinion, also, that the Corporation of Bombay do not view this public health (venereal health) problem as gravely as they should."[14]

That there is a pressing need in Bombay for special provision for the treatment of venereal disease among seamen cannot be denied. The number of prostitutes in the city is very large. Hence the incidence of veneral disease among the seamen of Bombay is bound to be high. In this connection, we would like to quote from a letter written by a British seaman, giving his impressions of the city of Bombay:

"We were driven around the Grant Road district and saw, I should imagine, all the brothels that you

[12] *Report of the Indian Delegation of the British Social Hygiene Council to the Government of Bombay*, p. 3.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

have in Bombay, and to me it was an experience that was repulsive as well as fascinating—fascinating to the degree of being a new experience. I should never have imagined that people slept on the street, to the extent that they do in Bombay, or that such a stinking smell could prevail where humans live, or that women who live by prostitution could be so numerous and congregate in one place, or that they should be behind bars, and that this black slave traffic could be carried on with the consent of the powers that be and in such a fashion....................We arrived back to the boat at 2 P. M. We all agreed that it was indeed a revelation to see what we did in the year 1938 of our Lord."[15]

The Indian Delegation of the British Social Hygiene Council, after carefully examining the problem of venereal disease in Bombay, expressed the hope that "the Provincial Government of Bombay will seriously consider the matter and co-operate with and use its influence with the Central Government of India to get provision made for a free and confidential venereological service open to all merchant seamen or boatmen without distinction of nationality for every member of the Mercantile Marine calling at the Port of Bombay."[16] Though the Delegation made this recommendation in 1927, it is not yet given effect to; and the position of seamen regarding

[15] Letter dated November 9, 1938, from a British seaman to Mr. S. V. Parulekar, General Secretary, National Trades Union Federation of India.

[16] Op. cit, p. 36.

the provision for the treatment of venereal disease remains the same even to this date.

The incidence of sickness due to other diseases is also high among the seamen of Bombay. Of the 3,415 seamen who were admitted to the Indian Sailors' Home during 1938, as many as 429, or a little more than 12 per cent., were the victims of some disease or the other. These figures, though not exhaustive in the sense that they do not apply to the total seafaring population of Bombay, are sufficient to indicate that the incidence of sickness among seamen is alarmingly high. Of the 429 cases, 94 were of malaria, 48 of influenza, 33 of bronchitis, 9 of diarrhoea and dysentery, 58 of wounds and skin diseases and the remaining 187 of a miscellaneous nature.[17] It is unfortunate that the number of cases of venereal disease is not shown separately.

Calcutta: Regarding hospital accommodation for sick seamen, the position in the port of Calcutta is rather distressing. All European, Anglo-Indian, Colonial and American seamen and officers of all description are admissible to the Presidency General Hospital. They are admitted there so far as accommodation permits and if no such accommodation is available, they are admitted in extra beds or arrangements are made for their admission in the Howrah General Hospital. All Indian, other Asiatic, African and West Indian seamen and officers have to apply for admission to the Howrah General

[17] *Indian Sailors' Home Society's Report*, for 1938, p. 10.

Hospital in the first instance and if no accommodation is available there, they have to apply to the Mayo, Sambunath Pandit or the Campbell Hospital.[18] Thus, there is some kind of discrimination on the basis of colour as between the various hospitals in Calcutta maintained and aided by the Government from the tax-payers' money receiving substantial grants from the Corporation of Calcutta. It is to be regretted that while Anglo-Indian, Colonial and American seamen of all description are admitted to the superior and better equipped hospitals, Indian seamen and officers are debarred from them.

The extent to which this policy of racial discrimination has been carried out all these years is evident from the following facts. The proceeds of the Port Health Dues Fund, collected from shipping companies under Section 50 of the Indian Ports Act, have been utilised almost entirely for the benefit of European seamen despite the fact that they are collected from the shipping companies many of which employ Indian seamen. For instance, in 1935-36 out of a total expenditure of about Rs. 65,000, Rs. 63,000 and over were spent for the benefit of European seamen in hospitals, while only about Rs. 1,000 were spent for Indian seamen.[19]

The necessity for special treatment centres for seamen is a long-felt want in the Port of Calcutta. Indian

18 Letter dated February 17, 1938, from Mr. G. L. Mehta, Calcutta, to Mr. N. M. Joshi, M. L. A.

19 Letter dated April 26, 1937, from the Secretary of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Commerce Department.

seamen as a class are poor and cannot afford to pay for proper treatment. It is difficult to get them adequately attended to in public hospitals, as these are usually overcrowded. It was only in 1937 that the Seamen's Welfare Association founded a venereal clinic and dispensary for seamen and sanctioned an expenditure of Rs. 20,000 for the year 1937-38. A suitable building, lent by the Missions to Seamen Society, was obtained to locate the Clinic as well as the medical officer in charge who stays on the premises. The Clinic has at present a waiting hall, examination rooms, dispensary, dental surgery, lavage room, a small laboratory and a few menials' quarters. The staff consists of one medical officer, one assistant surgeon, one sub-assistant surgeon, one dental surgeon, two compounders, three dressers, one clerk, one peon, one water carrier and one sweeper.

The equipment is just sufficient for ordinary outdoor work, says the report of the Clinic till 31st August 1938. As there is no in-door accommodation in the Clinic, patients who require hospital admission are sent to Howrah General Hospital the authorities of which have agreed to treat them at the rate of 12 annas per head for food plus certain special charges for X-ray examination, etc. The want of arrangements for serological investigation was keenly felt and the Government of India have agreed to the test, upto the limit of 40 a month, being carried out by the Imperial Serologist.

Owing to the importance of oral hygiene, particular-

ly for syphilitic patients, a Dental Department was started from the 1st of January 1938. The total expenditure incurred by the Clinic from June 1, 1937 to August 31, 1938 was Rs. 19,778. During the year ending 31st August 1938, the total number of new patients treated was 6,229, the average being 19·3 per working day, while the average daily attendance was 138·8. A large number of patients discontinued treatment before they were completely cured. This is due to the fluid nature of the clients. Most of the seamen, unless disabled for the time being by illness, get signed on at the first opportunity and leave the port regardless of whether they are completely cured or not and do not return till a few weeks or sometimes months have elapsed.

The following chart, showing the classification of patients according to the diseases for which they sought treatment in the Clinic, will be found interesting. The figures, which are taken from the annual report of the Clinic, refer to the period from August 23, 1937 to the end of August 1938.

	Disease		Total	Percentage
1	Syphilis: Primary		29	.5
	Secondary		23	.4
	Tertiary		167	2.7
2	Soft Sore		47	.8
3	Gonorrhoea: Acute		130	2.1
	Sub-Acute		133	2.1
	Chronic		2,685	43.1
4	Surgical: Major		186	3
	Minor		174	2.8
5	Diseases of the respiratory system:	Tuberculosis	99	1.6
		Other	286	4.6
6	Diseases of the Circulatory system		54	.8
7	Diseases of the Alimentary system:	Dysentery	73	1
		Diarrhoea	70	1
		Other	145	2.6
8	Diseases of the teeth and gum		325	5.2
9	Diseases of the eye		74	1
10	Diseases of the ear, nose and throat		54	.8
11	Diseases of the skin		405	6.5
12	Malaria		103	1.7
13	Kala Azar		25	.4
14	Influenza		324	5.2
15	Dengue		23	.4
16	Pyrexia of un-know origin and other diseases due to infection		248	4
17	Diseases due to difficiency or to disorders of nutrition or metabolism		159	2.5
18	Other Diseases		188	3
			6,229	100

The fact must be admitted that the Clinic, though doing some useful work, is not large enough to serve the full needs of the seafaring population of Calcutta. Moreover, arrangements for admitting in-door patients suffering from venereal disease will have to be made without any further loss of time in order to make the Clinic more useful.

Recreation: Along with the provision of facilities for the treatment of venereal disease, the introduction of measures for the prevention of the disease is equally important, if not more. This work can be carried out in two directions: (1) The organisation of healthy recreation; (2) and educative propaganda to show the dangers of venereal disease.

When seamen go on shore, the sudden and complete change in their way of life often leads them into excesses. The attraction of prostitutes for seamen is a general phenomenon. It is increased by the absence of adequate recreation facilities in ports. Experience gained in the various armies and navies has led to common recognition of the fact that a direct relationship exists between recreation facilites and the incidence of venereal disease. Where counter-attractions exist there is less promiscuity and consequently less venereal disease. This is also borne out by the varying incidence in the different fleets, according to whether they are visiting ports where social conditions are good and recreational facilites are provided, or the contrary. In both British and American navies those ships frequenting Eastern

ports show the highest incidence of disease, the British official figure for 1921 being 204·04 per thousand on a station including Indian ports, which was 100 per thousand higher than those of any station except China, the average figure for the total being 67·07 per thousand.[20] The United States Bulletin of 1925 draws special attention to the large amount of venereal disease incurred by the destroyers visiting Burma and India, the reasons adduced being the high incidence of the disease in the civil population and the lack of any recreational facilities. It is thus obvious that the organisation of amusements in Indian ports on an adequate scale and in various forms will go a long way in keeping seamen away from those temptations which involve a risk of venereal disease.

Educational Propaganda : The object of this propaganda should be to restrain seamen from running the risk of infection by informing them of the gravity of the danger. The Governments, Municipal Corporations, Port Trusts, shipping companies, seamen's unions and associations interested in the promotion of public health should organise propaganda of this kind by suitable lectures, pamphlets and articles in Indian languages, and, still better, by pictorial methods including posters and cinema films. This propaganda should be accompanied by propaganda of another kind intended to convince persons suffering from the disease of the necessity of receiving prompt and suitable treatment. Though private associ-

[20] See *Report of the Indian Delegation of the British Social Hygiene Council submitted to the Govt. of Madras,* pp. 26–27.

ations and individuals can undertake the work of spreading the necessary knowledge among seamen, it is the prime duty of the State and the public bodies to organise systematic propaganda in all important ports. So far, very little has been done in this direction by the Government of India and the local Governments of the maritime provinces.

The Belgian Agreement: The importance of the problem of combating venereal disease among seamen is emphasised by the fact that since 1918 many nations have been considering this problem and over twenty nations have taken definite action on it and signed an International Agreement known as the Belgian Agreement. The extract of the resolutions which the Health Section of the League of Nations transmitted to these nations, and for which the Office Internationale gained the support of over twenty countries is as follows:

"*Article* (*i*): The contracting parties agree to create and maintain in each of their principal ports, whether on river or sea, venereological services open to all merchant seamen or boatmen without distinction of nationality. This service shall have a special medical staff and shall be organised and constantly maintained in accordance with the most advanced standards of scientific method. They shall be established and shall function under such conditions that persons needing them shall be able to have an easy access to them. Their development will be in due proportion, in every port, to the volume of navigation, and they will have at their disposal a sufficient number

of beds. *Article* (*ii*): Medical attention as well as medicaments will be provided free; hospital treatment will also be given free whenever it is certified to be necessary by the Medical Officer in charge of the service. Persons receiving treatment will also receive, free of charge, any medicaments necessary for continuing the treatment in the course of the voyage until the next port can be reached. *Article* (*iii*): Each person treated will receive a strictly private 'case-book' in which he will be identified only by a number and in which the Medical Officers of the various clinics visited by him will enter—(a) The diagnosis, with a brief indication of clinical details observed at the time of examination. (b) The operations carried out at the clinic. (c) The prescriptions to be followed during the voyage. (d) The results of serological examinations carried out in the case of syphilis (Wassermann). These 'case-books' will be designed in accordance with the model herewith annexed. They may be modified later by administrative action. It is desirable, in order to facilitate comparison, that Wassermann tests should be made, as far as possible, according to a uniform technique. *Article* (*iv*): The captains of ships and owners of boats shall be charged to make known to their crews the existence of the services contemplated under the arrangements hereby made. At the time of visiting a vessel or on the occasion of his first visit on board, the Sanitary Officer will hand to the crew notices showing the places and hours of consultation. *Article* (*v*): Countries which have not

taken part in the present arrangement may be permitted to adhere to it on their own demand. These adhesions will be notified through the official channels to the Belgian Government, and by that Government to the other Signatory Governments."

Great Britain, Canada and New Zealand have already fulfilled the conditions of the Agreement, while Australia fulfils the majority of them. The Indian Government was approached by the Indian Delegation of the British Social Hygiene Council and was asked to adhere to the Belgian Agreement with a view to getting common action for all the principal ports of India. The Delegation stated in unmistakable terms: "It is important and a matter of urgency that both the Central Government of India and the Government of Bombay, through them, should adhere to this Agreement at the earliest possible date." No action has been taken on this recommendation, though more than a decade has elapsed since.

Geneva Recommendations: Having realised the importance of the problem of seamen's health, the International Labour Conference at its 21st Session held in October 1936 recommended that:

All suitable measures should be taken to make known to seamen entering the port, irrespective of their nationality: (a) the dangers and means of preventing diseases to which they are exposed, including more particularly tuberculosis and tropical and venereal diseases; (b) the necessity for persons suffering from

disease to undergo treatment and the facilities available for such treatment; and (c) the dangers arising from the habit of using narcotics. The treatment of seamen suffering from disease should be facilitated by suitable measures including: (a) as wide extension as possible, especially in the dock area, of free and continued treatment for venereal diseases, as provided, for example, by the Agreement concerning facilities to be given to merchant seamen for the treatment of venereal diseases, signed at Brussels, on December 1, 1924; (b) the admission of seamen to clinics and hospitals in ports; without difficulty and irrespective of nationality or religious belief; (c) as wide application as possible to foreign seamen of the provision made for the protection of nationals against tuberculosis; (d) the provision, whenever possible, of arrangements designed to ensure, when necessary, continuation of treatment with a view to supplementing the medical facilities available to seamen. The Conference also recommended that: There should be laws or regulations to protect seamen by measures, including the following, from the dangers to which they are exposed in certain establishments or in the docks as such: (a) the regulation of the sale of intoxicating liquor; (b) the prohibition of the employment in public houses of young persons of either sex under a certain age; (c) the application of the provisions of international agreements limiting the sale and use of narcotics to all seamen without distinction of nationality; (d) the prohibition of the entry into the

docks and harbour area generally of undesirable persons; (e) the fencing off of dock areas and the protection of the edges of wharves and quays and other dangerous parts of docks by fixed or moveable barriers, wherever such measures are practicable; (f) the provision of sufficient lighting and, where necessary, of signposts for docks and approaches.

Needless to state that the Government of India should give effect to these recommendations without any delay.

CHAPTER X

SOCIAL INSURANCE

1. NEED FOR A UNIFIED SCHEME

It is now universally agreed that a comprehensive scheme of social insurance has become a necessity for all wage earners as long as they live in a constant fear of insecurity. Seamen in many countries are protected against the risks of accident, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, old age and death by schemes of social insurance. But Indian seamen, except in the case of certain accidents, are left entirely insecure and unprotected in spite of the fact that unemployment is very severe amongst them, that the incident of sickness is alarmingly high and that their wages are extremely low.

As early as 1920, the International Labour Conference adopted a Recommendation suggesting the establishment of an effective system of insurance against unemployment for seamen. Further in 1936, the Conference adopted a Convention in favour of instituting a scheme of sickness insurance for seamen. But the Government of India have not yet taken any action on both the Recommendation and the Convention. The arguments advanced by the Government for not taking action must be examined. Speaking on behalf of the Government, Mr. C. A. Innes stated, in the course of the debate in the Legislative Assembly, that no system of unemployment

insurance was practicable in India for two reasons. The first reason was that Indian seamen combined to a large degree their seafaring profession with the profession of agriculture, so that when they were unemployed they could always go back to their villages and find employment in the fields. The second reason was that the Government had no machinery with them by which they could make the insurance system effective.[1]

The first argument is not based on facts but on imagination. It is not true to say that Indian seamen are essentially agriculturists. The fact is that seamen in India are recruited only from certain classes of people who look to maritime employment exclusively as their occupation handed down from father to son. The agrarian moorings of the Indian sailor have long been snapped. He cannot now look upon his village as a refuge in time of distress. If he goes there, he becomes an unwelcome guest and a heavy burden on his people who are themselves underfed and half-clothed on account of their grinding poverty which is common among the Indian agricultural classes. The seaman himself cannot cultivate land as he is not accustomed to that kind of work. The second argument that the Government had no machinery to administer the scheme is a flimsy one. The Government can certainly create the required machinery within a short time if they so desire. Mr. Innes, however, assured the House that because Government had then

[1] *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 26, 1921, pp. 1026-27.

decided to take no action on the Recommendation, it did not follow that they would never take any action, thus indirectly suggesting that the Government would take action at a future date. But so far nothing has been done though 18 years have rolled on!

With regard to the Convention concerning sickness insurance for seamen, the Commerce Member of the Government of India, in a statement laid on the table of the Legislative Assembly on the 29th November 1938, outlined the views of the Government. The statement is quoted below:[2]

"This Convention is designed to introduce an extensive system of compulsory insurance for seamen, providing for cash benefits as well as benefits in kind. After an examination of the terms of the Convention, the Government of India are of the opinion that the institution of a compulsory system of insurance in India applicable to all classes of seamen covered by the Convention and providing for the grant of the different forms of benefits contemplated therein cannot be undertaken except as part of a comprehensive scheme catering for all classes of labourers. Further, in view of the fact that a large number of Indian seamen are illiterate, a compulsory system of insurance is not likely to receive general support, and the Government of India have accordingly come to the conclusion that the Convention cannot be ratified. They are, however, in full sympathy with the

[2] *Ibid.*, November 29, 1938, p. 3514.

object underlying the Convention, and they propose to explore, in consultation with the interests concerned, the possibility of introducing, as an initial measure, a small scheme of health insurance providing for limited benefits to Indian seamen."

In the first place, the statement, without giving any reasons, simply says that a compulsory system of sickness insurance for seamen cannot be undertaken except as part of a comprehensive scheme catering for all classes of labourers. It is difficult to understand why an independent scheme catering for seamen only cannot be established immediately, without waiting for a time when a comprehensive scheme for all industrial workers would be introduced. The case of seamen deserves special and earlier solution, in view of the fact that they, unlike other sections of Indian labourers, work along with European seamen who have been demanding their exclusion from European ships on the ground that the bad conditions under which Indian seamen work tend to debase the international standards of maritime labour. Secondly, it is a great mistake to hold that a compulsory scheme is not likely to receive general support among seamen on the ground that a large number of them are illiterate. Indian seamen, though illiterate, can very well appreciate the advantages of a social insurance scheme. That this is so is more than clear from the fact that many clubs of Goan seamen in Bombay have already organised death benefit and other schemes of social insurance for the benefit of their members. The truth is that

the Government is absolutely indifferent to the needs of Indian seamen and in order to save its face brings forward all sorts of arguments which are not at all convincing. A mere statement that the Government are in full sympathy with the object underlying the International Convention and that they propose to explore the possibility of a small scheme of health insurance is not going to satisfy the seamen unless the Convention is ratified immediately and a scheme of social insurance is brought into existence.

What is urgently required is the establishment by the Government of India of a unified scheme of social insurance covering the risks of (1) industrial accidents and occupational diseases, (2) unemployment, (3) sickness, (4) invalidity, old age and death. The scheme should be a unified one because the object underlying social insurance, whether it is against sickness, unemployment or any other risk, is the same, namely, to afford adequate protection when it is needed, irrespective of the consideration whether the need arises from the one or the other risk. Moreover, a unified scheme is bound to be cheaper, as a single machinery will be sufficient to administer it. The unified scheme is also more convenient and easily accessable to the worker. Secondly, the scheme should be compulsory and not voluntary. A voluntary scheme assumes economic prosperity in which the workers can exercise thrift and save enough from their earnings to protect themselves against risks. But the extremely low wages of Indian seamen do not allow any

scope for thrift, thus ruling out the possibility of the successful working of a voluntary scheme of social insurance. A compulsory system alone is feasible for Indian seamen. Thirdly, the scheme should be administered by the State and not by employers or private insurance companies. An insurance scheme administered by the State is bound to be less expensive than the one administered by private companies, as the motive of the latter is to make profits. Again, private schemes by employers have a serious disadvantage from the point of view of the employees, namely, that the employees become tied down to one employer and their freedom to win better conditions with another employer is restricted. Fourthly, the scheme should be non-contributory, that is to say, no contribution by workers should be demanded, the financial burden of the scheme being shared between the State and the shipowners. Contribution by workers to a scheme of social insurance presupposes minimum wage legislation ensuring a comfortable wage to every worker. In the absence of such legislation and in view of the extremely low wages of a vast majority of Indian seamen, it will be cruel to demand contribution from seamen. If, however, it is decided to have a contributory scheme, the contribution which seamen will be asked to share should be very small. If the contribution is high, the very purpose of the scheme will be frustrated, as seamen will not be able to contribute their share. Under no circumstances, the contribution from seamen should be more than 5 per cent. of their wages, while the rest of

the amount required should be shared between the ship-owners and the Government. Fifthly, the benefits under the scheme should be sufficient to provide the seaman and his family with the minimum necessary for their existence. It may be suggested that the benefit should be at least two-thirds of the wage of those seamen whose monthly earnings are below Rs. 30 and one-half in the case of those whose earnings are higher. Finally, benefits under the scheme should also include free medical treatment during the period of sickness. It may be noted in this connection that the Royal Commission on Labour in India recommended that the responsibility for medical benefits should be undertaken by Government on a non-contributory basis.[4]

2. WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT

The position of seamen under the provisions of the Indian Workmen's Compensation Act is peculiar in the sense that the Act applies only to a few of them who are engaged on ships registered in India. Thus a great majority of Indian seamen, who are employed on ships registered outside India, are excluded from the scope of the Act while they are on high seas. The Royal Commission on Labour examined this question at some length and made certain valuable suggestions. The Commission stated:[5]

"The great majority of Indian seamen, however,

[4] *R. C. L. I.*, ***Report***, p. 268.

[5] *R. C. L. I.*, ***Report***, pp. 299-300.

are engaged on ships registered outside India, and mainly on British ships. These have no statutory claim to compensation under the Indian Act; but they have the protection of the British and other Workmen's Compensation Acts. It is, however, in most cases a difficult matter for them to avail themselves of this protection, and their dependants find it even more difficult. For example, if a seaman is killed while engaged on a British ship plying between Calcutta and the Far East, and compensation is refused, his dependants must prosecute the claim in Great Britain. This difficulty has been to some extent overcome by an arrangement in which practically all the shipping companies employing Indian lascars have co-operated. Under this arrangement, the shipowner and the seaman, at the time of signing the articles, enter into an additional article of agreement by which, in the event of accidents, compensation in accordance with the Indian Act can be claimed by seamen who do not prosecute claims elsewhere, and the Commissioners under the Indian Act are accepted as arbitrators in the event of disputes. On the whole, this arrangement appears to have worked smoothly but it cannot be regarded as entirely satisfactory. In the first place, it is apparently within the option of the shipowner to refuse to enter into the agreement. In the second place, according to our information the agreement does not give the dependants a legal claim, although employers have not taken advantage of this loophole."

After making these observations, the Commission

recommended that (1) steps should be taken to ensure that the dependants are capable of enforcing the agreement, that (2) the Government should see that all shipowners engaging Indian seamen enter into the agreement, that (3) the principle of the international law that, on a ship belonging to a particular country, the law applicable while on the high seas is the law of that country, should be modified by reciprocal arrangements between the countries concerned and that (4) the possibilities of giving Indian seamen the right to compensation while serving on ships registered in the United Kingdom, should be further explored by the Government of India and the Home Office. It is unfortunate that the Government of India have not yet taken action on these recommendations.

The Indian Workmen's Compensation Act should undergo certain changes from the point of view of seamen, whose rights against their employers under the Act should, to some extent, be distinct from those of other workers owing to their peculiar conditions of work. At present, under section 3, an accident occurring during transport from shore to vessel or from vessel to shore may not be considered as arising out of and in the course of employment, with the result that the seaman is debarred from claiming compensation. It is, therefore, necessary that the section should be amended so that an accident should be deemed to arise in connection with the employment if it occurrs during transport between shore and vessel. Secondly, under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, a sea-

man may be discharged in a foreign port in certain cases, with the liability on the shipowner to repatriate him. In such cases, his 'employment' terminates at the moment of discharge, and accordingly an accident suffered during repatriation is not compensatable. The Act should, therefore, be amended so as to make the employer liable to pay compensation for accidents occuring during repatriation. Similarly, accidents arising in connection with rescue and salvage of human beings or goods should *in all cases* be compensatable.

Again, under the present law, in the case of seamen meeting with accidents in the course of their employment in a foreign port and undergoing treatment in hospitals abroad, compensation is only payable as from the date of the injured seaman's return to India, irrespective of the period he has been laid up abroad as a result of the accident. This causes great hardship to the family of the injured seaman in view of the fact that he may be lying in the hospital for months without any money of compensation or allotment of wages going into his home for the maintenance of his family, his wages having ceased the moment he is put on shore abroad. Provision should, therefore, be made to remove this hardship by entitling the injured seaman to receive wages in whole or at least in part from the time he is landed until his return to a proper return port. The wages thus paid can be set off against the amount of compensation subsequently established in respect of the injury. There can also be cases of seamen disappearing

at sea and the dependants failing to recover compensation, owing to the fact that they were unable to establish that the disappearance was due to an accident arising out of and in the course of employment. The Act should be amended to place the onus of proof on the shipowner that the disappearance at sea did not arise in connection with the employment.

3. THE SEAMEN'S SPECIAL FUND

Indian seamen employed on British ships are interested in a fund known as "The Seamen's Special Fund" which has been established in Great Britain under section 64 of the National Health Insurance Act, 1924, as amended by the National Health Insurance Act, 1928, and section 39 of the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1920. The financial resources of the Fund are derived from the health and unemployment insurance contributions compulsorily payable by shipowners in respect of their employees who are neither domiciled nor have a place of residence in the United Kingdom. The Fund is, however, used for the provision of benefits to seamen domiciled in Great Britain. According to the latest information available,[6] the Fund provides pensions for men of the age of sixty-five or over fifty (in the case of blind persons) with long sea service at the rate of 5*s.* a week. The Fund is administered by a Governing Body composed of representatives of shipowners and of insured seamen. The income of the Fund for the year 1933 was £.125,000,

[6] *International Survey of Social Services*, 1933, Vol. I, pp. 373-74.

while the amount of the Fund on December 31, 1933 was £.1,125,000, of which £.1,100,000 was invested.

The position of those seamen who have no domicile in the United Kingdom but who are all the same employees of British shipowners is extremely unfortunate with regard to this Fund. In spite of the fact that the shipowners pay their share of contribution, these seamen are not entitled to receive any benefits out of them on the mere technical ground that they have no domicile in the United Kingdom. Thus the persons who are benefitted are the seamen domiciled in Great Britain at the expense of their comrades who are non-domiciles, a great majority of whom are Indian seamen. Needless to point out that great injustice has been done to these men by depriving them of their due benefits. Only a modification of the British law can remove this injustice. It is for the Government of India to secure this necessary change by bringing pressure upon the British Government. The law should be so amended as to provide for the transfer of the contributions paid by employers in respect of Indian seamen to the Government of India, with a stipulation that the transferred amount should be used for the purpose of providing benefits to Indian seamen. It is worth while to note, in this connection, that the Irish seamen employed by British shipowners, though they have no domicile in the United Kingdom, are not deprived of their benefits under section 64 of the National Health Insurance Act. The position of Indian seamen should be the same as that of the Irish seamen.

CHAPTER XI

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

1. TRADE UNIONISM

Trade unionism in the western sense of the term is of recent growth in India and among Indian seamen. Although the development of the movement has been accelerated since the close of the Great War, the movement is still in its earlier stages and has not yet attained that degree of strength, which seamen's organisations in the West generally possess.

Historically, the first organisation of Indian seamen was formed in the year 1908, when the Indian Seamen's Anjuman came into existence at the port of Calcutta.[1] The principal objects of this association were to render help to the distressed seamen and to promote their well-being in all possible ways. The seamen themselves were the active workers of this Union. But these workers having gone to sea, the Union remained in a dormant state till 1918, when it was reorganised and styled as the Indian Seamen's Benevolent Union. In 1920, it once again changed its name and since then is known as the Indian Seamen's Union. Coming to Bombay, trade combinations among seamen date only as far back as the year 1919. The Asiatic Seamen's Union and the Portuguese (Goa) Seafarers' Union were the earliest formations

[1] *History and Development of the Indian Seamen's Union*, pp. 1-8.

which amalgamated together in 1921 under the name of the Indian Seamen's Union.[2]

Although the Seamen's Anjuman at Calcutta was formed in 1908, it was not until the close of the Great War that the real trade union movement can be said to have begun among Indian seamen. This was due to a variety of causes. Immediately after the war, the shipping industry was yielding phenomenal profits, the cost of living rose by leaps and bounds, but wages lagged behind prices. Consequently, seamen found it much harder than before to make a proper living. Secondly, Indian seamen had served the cause of the British Empire with bravery and single-minded devotion during the war, with the high hope that the Government would take steps to improve their ecomomic and social condition as a reward for their services. But only utter disappointment was the result, as the conditions of seamen became worse after the war instead of showing any improvement. This led to a deep conviction on the part of seamen that it was useless to depend entirely on the outside agency whether it was the Government or any other body, and that the conditions of labour could only be improved more effectively and quickly by building up its own organisation. The world-wide uprising of labour consciousness immediately after the war also contributed its share. The holding of the first session of the International Labour Conference specially devoted to maritime

2 *R. C. L. I., Evidence*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 333.

problems at Genoa in 1920, which was attended by a representative of Indian seamen, gave further fillip to the movement.

From these beginnings, the trade union movement among Indian seamen has steadily developed, and to-day its influence is being felt over a large number of the seafaring population. The membership of unions is also growing. According to the latest information, the Indian Seamen's Union at Calcutta has a membership of 23,000, while the Seamen's Union, Bombay, has more than 12,000 members on its roll, making a total of 35,000. In addition to these two major unions, there are five minor unions, namely, the Indian Quartermasters' Union, Calcutta; the Bengal Mariners' Union, Calcutta; the Seamen's Welfare League of India, Calcutta; the National Seamen's Union of India, Bombay; and the Karachi Seamen's Union, Karachi. All the unions are affiliated to a common national organisation called the All-India Seamen's Federation with its headquarters at Calcutta.

The truth must, however, be admitted that the movement has not yet passed beyond its first stage of development and has not grown as powerful as it ought to have been. The reasons for this situation are many. In the first place, nearly the whole mass of maritime labour in India is illiterate, a state of affairs which is unknown in any other maritime country. Though separate figures showing the extent of literacy among seamen are not available, the very fact that it is customary for all seamen to put their thumb impressions on

the Continuous Discharge Certificates at the time of signing on and off, indicates the state of almost universal illiteracy amongst them. While only 8 per cent. of India's population can read or write, it would be futile to expect a higher percentage of literacy among Indian seamen. That this lack of literacy is one of the most serious obstacles in the way of the trade union movement is undeniable. To inculcate the principles of collective bargaining into illiterate workers is by no means an easy task, though their capacity to appreciate the values of collective action is great. As the Royal Commission observed, where the lack of education makes itself most strongly felt is in the reluctance to take a long view.[3] It is extremely difficult to convince the ignorant worker of the advantages of a trade union which cannot promise immediate return.

The second serious handicap is the extreme poverty of the seamen. As shown in chapter VI, Indian seamen are the poorest among the seafarers of the world and the earnings of a vast majority of them fall far below the subsistence level. Even a small subscription of two or three rupees per year is an appreciable burden to them, particularly when they are already encumbered by heavy debts. Long periods of unemployment further add to their difficulty to continue as members of the union after they have joined it. I have known many cases wherein seamen in Bombay were very anxious to pay the union's subscription but were unable to do so

[3] *R. C. L. I., Report*, p. 322.

on account of unemployment. Moreover, insecurity of service drives the worker to take a pessimistic view of life, as a result of which he loses all interest in the union. Again, the low income of the unions makes it impossible for an adequate and efficient staff to be maintained. The movement is, therefore, dependent on outside leaders who can do the work without accepting remuneration. Although this is inevitable in the present stage of its development, the inherent defects of this dependence are a source of weakness.

The fact that, in spite of their shortcomings and handicaps, the seamen's organisations in India have attained a considerable measure of success in their work cannot be disputed. As early as 1919, the Union at Calcutta successfully conducted a strike as a result of which an increase in wages was secured.[4] In 1920, the Union at Bombay organised a strike and obtained an increase in wages ranging from 30 to 35 per cent.[5] Recognising the claims of labour for representation on important committees, two representatives of seamen were nominated by the Government of India on the Seamen's Recruitment Committee appointed in 1921. The report submitted by them, as shown in Chapter II, opened the eyes of the world to the prevalence of bribery on an extensive scale at the ports of Bombay and Calcutta. As a result of consistent propaganda carried on by the

[4] *History and Development of the Indian Seamen's Union, Calcutta*, p. 4.

[5] *R. C. L. I. Evidence*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 292.

unions all these years, bribery has been checked to some extent in recent years. The Indian Seamen's Union at Calcutta, for instance, has started a regular campaign against bribery since 1937, and has achieved a considerable measure of success in its attempts in spite of heavy odds. Similarly, the Seamen's Union, Bombay, after a fierce struggle, which lasted from December 1938 to March 1939 and during which period many seamen had to court arrest, succeeded in securing to its members the right of being employed in rotation so that bribery may be checked and an equitable distribution of employment be secured among all seamen. In short, whatever slight improvement in the conditions of maritime labour has been secured in the course of the last eighteen years, is to a great extent due to the efforts of seamen's organisations.

Also, mention may be made of the fact that Indian seamen have considerably gained by taking an active interest in the International Labour Organisation. Representatives of Indian seamen have been regularly attending the maritime sessions of the I. L. Conference and have been successful in drawing the attention of the whole world to the terrible conditions of Indian seamen. There is no doubt that the visits of these delegates to Geneva have done much to rouse the intelligent and active interest of seamen's organisations in Europe to the conditions of their comrades in India.

2. THE ATTITUDE OF EMPLOYERS

Perhaps in no other country the gulf between the

shipowners and their employees is so wide as in the case of Indian maritime workers. As already stated, an overwhelming majority of Indian seamen are employed on ships owned by European companies. Not only the shipowners but also the captains and all important officers of the ships are Europeans, the Indian seamen forming only the lowest ranks of the crew. These officers are of a different race, nationality, tradition, habits and mode of living from those of the Indian seamen working under them. This difference tends to create more misunderstanding and less sympathy on the part of the shipowners and the officers towards their alien employees. It is not as easy for a European to appreciate the difficulties of an Asiatic as those of his own countryman. Indian seamen are further confronted by difficulties of language. They are ignorant of English or French and the European officers have no knowledge of Indian languages. Thus the Indian sailor has to work under a person not knowing his language. He is unable to express himself before his boss whenever an explanation is demanded of him, the result being that he is misunderstood in many cases and may be even discharged without a thorough enquiry.

Again, there is a difficulty in establishing close contact between the shipowners on the one hand and the seamen's organisations in India on the other. The headquarters of the Shipping Federation being in the United Kingdom, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the leaders of seamen's organisations to meet the employ-

ers and acquaint them with the problems of Indian seamen from time to time. It is true that the individual shipping companies have their agents in Indian ports. But this does not in any way improve the situation in view of the fact that these agents possess no powers to act in important matters. For example, they cannot grant a wage increase, fix the hours of work or contribute to a social insurance fund. The ultimate authority for deciding such matters is the Shipping Federation of Great Britain or other similar national organisation of shipowners in the case of non-English European employers. Moreover, the shipping companies in Europe entirely depend on their Indian agents for a knowledge of the conditions and qrievancės of their Indian employees. It is through these agents that the shipowners try to understand the needs of Indian seamen. Too much reliance on their Indian agents by the shipowners and the absence of any direct contact between the shipowners in Europe and the seamen's representatives in India are serious obstacles in the way of establishing proper relations between the employers and the employees. The result is that the seamen feel that their virtual master is the local agent himself and that it is useless to appeal to the higher authorities in England or elsewhere.

The attitude of the shipping agents is either one of open hostility or of utter indifference towards trade unions. The recognition of unions is extremely rare. At present the seamen's unions both at Bombay and Calcutta are not recognised by most of the companies,

though they are registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act. Similarly, the Shipping Federation has consistently refused to recognise the All-India Seamen's Federation. It is the declared policy of some shipping companies to crush powerful unions by victimising their active members. As Secretary of the Seamen's Union, Bombay, I have come across cases in which some seamen actively participating in the work of the Union have been refused employment on ships. The other method usually followed is to win over prominent workers of the movement by offering them substantial sums of money as a reward for breaking the strength of the union, and for starting a company union as a rival to it. The paying of bribes to the police with instructions to keep an eye over the activities of the union and to arrest the ringleaders under various pretexts is not uncommon. This is particularly true during periods of strikes or stoppages of the supply of crews. What has been said here does not, however, apply to every shipping company. There are, of course, honourable exceptions.

This attitude of hostility on the part of the shipowners is not in the true interest of either capital or labour. It is not the path of prudence or wisdom for an employer to ignore, much less to oppose, the trade union movement which is recognised as legitimate throughout the world and which has come to stay among Indian seamen. So long as the present relationship lasts, with the seamen determined to organise into unions and the employers challenging their right, there can be no

peace in the industry. It is time that the shipping agents changed their attitude with the spirit of the times. If they fail to do so, it is for the State to undertake measures to promote proper relations between the parties. How the State can do this by means of setting up a Joint Maritime Board will be discussed later.

3. THE ATTITUDE OF GOVERNMENTS

The attitude of the Governments, both Central and Provincial, is to a great extent responsible for the hostile attitude of the shipowners towarde seamen's organisations. This is the real tragedy of the situation. The Government of India have always viewed the workers' movement with deep suspicion and great distrust and often with open hostility. Moreover, as shown in the earlier chapters, the Central Government generally does not do anything which would not meet with the approval of the British shipping companies. It seems that the main concern of the Government has all along been to protect the vested interests of the Britishers in India rather than to better the conditions of Indian labour. It is this attitude of the Central Government that has encouraged the shipping companies to maintain an attitude of hostility or of utter indifference towards the seamen's organisations.

Provincial Governments, with their 'law and order' obsession are in no way better than the Central Government in this respect. The story of the trade union movement in this country is full of repressive mea-

sures directed by Provincial Governments against the working classes. This is particularly true during strikes or disputes. It is notorious that the police are generally instructed to curb the legitimate activities of the unions. It can be shown that there has been no change in this policy even after the popular parties assumed office under the new Constitution. As a typical instance, reference may be made to the attitude shown by the Congress Government of Bombay towards the Seamen's Union during a very recent trade dispute. The facts of the case are as follows:

The Seamen's Union, Bombay, having failed to secure the fulfilment of its demand that seamen should be employed in rotation, decided to stop the supply of crews on ships till the demand was conceded. Thus the struggle between the shipping companies and the Union began on December 7, 1938. During the period of the struggle lasting for nearly four months, the Union took out three big processions of unemployed seamen to the Government Secretariat with a view to enlisting public sympathy and placing their demand before the Minister for Labour and requesting him to bring about an amicable settlement. But each time the processionists were not permitted to reach the Secretariat, having been stopped on their way by the city police. How this interference on the part of the police resulted in curtailing the elementary rights of citizenship, was pointed out by the General Secretary of the Union in a press statement which is worth quoting

here: "After a good deal of unusual aud unnecessary enquiry by the police, a permit was issued for the procession to go up to the Secretariat. But Govermnent changed its mind at the last minute when the original permit was cancelled and the procession was forbidden to go beyond the Queen's Statue. The route which was to be taken by the procession showed that the Government was anxious that the public should not even see the pitiable plight of the hungry marchers. This interference of the Government in stopping the procession at the Queen's Statue and prescribing a lonely route is unjustifiable. This is a severe curtailment of the right of hungry men to shout out their miseries with a view to bringing them to the notice of the public." What is more, each procession was escorted with many police officers and constables—and in one case nearly two hundred—armed with *lathis* and rifles. This unnecessary and wanton display of police force was made with a deliberate view to terrorising the marchers.

The Government did not stop at that. They went a step further and during the period of the struggle arrested many seamen, including some office-bearers of the Union, under the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, a piece of repressive legislation universally condemned throughout the country. It should be remembered that the objects of the original Act, which was first enacted in 1908, were "to obtain the prompter decision of the criminal cases of a complex nature arising out of an anarchist conspiracy; and to obtain an

effective way of dealing with criminal associations." Though the object of the Act was thus to put a curb on anarchist and terrorist activities, the weapon was ruthlessly used against the Seamen's Union, which was a perfectly legal body. If the members of the Union had indulged in unlawful activities, the ordinary law of the land should have been used to bring them to book. But under no circumstances, the extraordinary procedure of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, under which a non-cognisable and bailable offence could be made cognisable and non-bailable, should have been brought into force.

The Government continued their repressive policy even after the termination of the dispute. On September 4, 1939, the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, made an order, under the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931, requiring the Joint General Secretary of the Union to deposit security of Rs. 1,000 as publisher and printer of the *Bombay Seaman*, a journal in Konkani, proposed to be started on behalf of the Union. A similar order was also made in connection with the publication of the Urdu edition of the paper. Instead of having recourse to repressive legislation, the Government could have certainly prosecuted the editor of the journal under the ordinary law of the land, if anything objectionable had appeared in the journal. The very fact that the Government did not choose that course was a clear indication that their real motive was to curb the activities of the Union. The Magistrate's order was

condemned by the Bombay Civil Liberties Union which held that the Government had "perpetrated an outrage on the freedom of the press" and "suppressed the voice of the maritime workers of Bombay."

The facts cited above well warrant the conclusion that, though the popular Governments have replaced the old bureaucratic Governments in the provinces, there has been no basic change in their attitude towards the trade unions.

4. MACHINERY FOR NEGOTIATIONS

If it is the intention of the Governments to suppress trade disputes or collective action on the part of the workers with a view to restoring peace in industry, they are seriously mistaken in their belief. Suppression of strikes or the trade union movement will never bring peace. On the contrary, it will increase discontent and invite more trouble. The only way of solving the problem is to encourage the healthy growth of seamen's organisations and to establish an effective machinery by setting up a Joint Maritime Board for the settlement of industrial disputes. Seamen in India have always preferred settlement by negotiations. But the employers with their old-fashioned outlook have generally preferred a fight to the finish. For instance, in the course of the dispute above referred to, the Seamen's Union, Bombay, wrote to the Agents of the P. & O. and B. I. Companies communicating to them the desire of the President of the Union to meet them in order to discuss

the situation and to come to an amicable settlement, if possible. But the Agents declined to have any talk with the President, remarking in their letter dated January 5, 1939, that no useful purpose would be served by having a discussion on the points under issue. It is this kind of attitude that finally drives the workers to resort to their last weapon of strike.

At present there is no permanent conciliation machinery through which the seamen's organisations in India can effectively negotiate with the shipowners. The Government should realise that the establishment of a Joint Maritime Board for this purpose will get the shipping agents in India accustomed to collective bargaining with seamen's organisations, with the result that proper relations will be maintained between the parties. That the existence of such a joint machinery has rendered real service to both shipowners and seamen in other maritime countries, should be carefully noted. For instance, the I. L. O. report authoritatively states that the Joint Maritime Board of Japan "is of great value to the shipping industry" and that "it has rendered to the industry the signal service of settling the 1928 strike by the adoption of minimum wage rates."[6] Similar praise can also be bestowed upon the National Maritime Board of the United Kingdom.

A National Maritime Board similar to that of the United Kingdom should be immediately set up in India. The objects of the Board of the United Kingdom, which

[6] *Industrial Labour in Japan*, pp. 129-30.

was set up in 1917, are to prevent and adjust differences between shipowners and seamen; to establish, revise and maintain national standard rates of wages and approved conditions of employment, and to establish a single source of supply of sailors and firemen, jointly controlled by employers and employed. The Board consists of five Panels, each made up of twelve members of each side, dealing respectively with (1) masters, (2) navigating officers, (3) engineers, (4) sailors and firemen, and (5) the catering department. The employers' representatives of these Panels are elected by the Shipping Federation and the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool jointly. The seamen concerned are represented on their respective Panels by the nominees of their respective unions. The five Panels sitting together constitute the full Board. The Panels sit separately and independently, to negotiate wages and other conditions of employment on a national basis for the grade or grades which they represent. Their are two Chairmen, one elected by and from each side, who take the chair at alternate meetings. The Chairman has no casting vote. No stoppage or lock-out is to take place or indemnity, strike pay, or assistance to be offered by either side in the event of a difference or dispute, until the question has been dealt with by the Board. Each Panel (excepting the Masters' Panel) has power to appoint District Committees known as District Panels. The District Panels appoint one or two representatives of each side of each Panel who are called "Port Consul-

tants." It is the duty of the Port Consultants to prevent delay to vessels by endeavouring to settle any differences arising between masters and crews on the basis of such existing agreements as may have been concluded by the National Panel. Any question which cannot be settled by the Port Consultants is referred to the District Panel, and, if necessary, to the National Panel, but neither the District Panel nor the Port Consultants have power to alter, vary or amend any scale of wages or other conditions formulated by the Board.[7]

The objects and the composition of the National Maritime Board of Japan are more or less based on the model of the British Maritime Board. The Japanese Board consists of six representatives from each side; and the chairman is chosen alternately.[8]

The Indian Maritime Board, it may be suggested, should be a statutory body to be set up by the Government of India in consultation with the Provincial Governments concerned. The constitution of the Board, including its objects, should be similar to that of the British Board, with minor modifications to suit the local conditions. For instance, instead of five panels, the Indian Board may consist of four panels, namely, (1) the Masters' and Officers' Panel; (2) the Deck Department Panel, (3) the Engine Department Panel, and (4) the Saloon Department Panel, each Panel having three

7 For the Constitution of the Board, see *the National Maritime Board Year Book*, 1938, pp. 78-87.

8 *Industrial Labour in Japan*, pp. 130-131.

or four members on each side. District Committees will be of little use in India. Hence there should be Port Committees and Port Panels. Similar changes of a minor character may be introduced. But it is important that the salient features of the constitution of the Board should be based on the British model, because experience has shown that the British system has worked well not only in the United Kingdom but also in Japan where it was first introduced in 1926.

CHAPTER XII

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT

The only important piece of legislation regulating the conditions of Indian seamen is the Indian Merchant Shipping Act of 1923. Before this Act was passed, the mercantile marine law was contained in no less then 21 different enactments, some of them dating back nearly a century, and many of them overlapping and interlocking in a complicated and confused way. Hence the present Act of 1923 was passed with a view to consolidating the earlier enactments and also making improvements in them.

The Act of 1923 is a bulky measure consisting of nine Parts and 296 Sections. Of these Part II, which consists of 120 Sections, concerns seamen, the other parts dealing with matters relating to passenger ships, pilgrim ships, safety of the ship, navigation, wreck and salvage, etc. Some contents of the Act concerning seamen have already been described in connection with problems dealt with in the earlier chapters. Hence only the remaining important provisions of the Act will be discussed here.

Under Sections 27 and 28, every master of the ship must enter into an agreement with each member of the crew at the time of his engagement. The agreement should contain, among other things, the nature and

duration of the voyage, the capacity in which the seaman is to serve, the amount of wages which he is to receive, the scale of provisions to be furnished to him, and any regulations as to conduct on board and as to fines, short allowance of provisions or other lawful punishments for misconduct, which have been sanctioned by the Governor General in Council. The agreement should be signed by each seaman in the presence of the Shipping Master. Under the provisions of Section 30, the agreement may be made either for one voyage of the ship or, if the voyages of the ship average less than six months in duration, for two or more voyages. But under no circumstances can the duration of any agreement be extended over a period of twelve months. On the termination of the agreement, each seaman should be discharged in the manner provided in the Act in the presence of the Shipping Master.

Under Section 28, where it is agreed that the services of a seaman should end at any port not in British India, the master of the ship may enter into an agreement to provide the seaman 'fit employment' on board some other ship bound to the port at which he was shipped. This provision is rather defective in the sense that it does not define 'fit employment.' It is possible that the employment on the other ship, which according to the master may be a fit one, may be quite unsuitable to the seaman. In fact, there have been cases where a seaman, after being transferred to some other ship, was asked to do a more difficult job on the pay atta-

ched to his original job. It is, therefore, necessary that specific rules should be framed under this Section defining what 'fit employment' is.

According to the provisions of Section 47, the master or the owner of the ship should pay to evey seaman his wages within three days after the cargo has been delivered or within five days after the seaman's discharge whichever happens first. Thus the seaman remains unpaid for three or five days as the case may be. In order to receive his pay he has to wait for this period in the port of his discharge. But he is not entitled to receive any remuneration for this waiting period. This is hardly fair, especially when the seaman has no home in the port of his discharge. If he is required to wait in the port, he should be paid for the waiting period. A provision to that effect should, therefore, be inserted in the Act. Again, under Section 55, the seaman's right to wages begins only at the time at which he actually commences his work and not from the day when he is engaged or is signed on. It is necessary that the seaman should be paid for this period of interval between the day of signing on and the day of his joining the ship.

The Act confers certain rights on seamen in respect of their wages, the more important of which are the following as contained in Sections 61 and 62 : If a seaman having signed an agreement is discharged otherwise than in accordance with the terms thereof before the commencement of the voyage or before one month's wages are earned, without fault on his part justifying

that discharge and without his consent, he is entitled to receive from the master, in addition to any wages he may have earned, due compensation for the damage caused to him by the discharge, not exceeding one month's wages. As regards wages due or accruing to a seaman, they are not subject to attachment by order of any Court; an assignment or sale made prior to the accruing thereof cannot bind the person making the same; a power-of-attorney or authority for the receipt of the wages is not irrevocable; and a payment of wages to a seaman shall be valid in law notwithstanding any previous sale or assignment of those wages or any attachment or encumbrance.

The most controversial provisions of the Act are those relating to discipline. Under Section 100, a seaman after he signs the articles of agreement cannot leave the ship till the agreement terminates. If he deserts from the ship he is liable to forfeit all or any part of his effects and of the wages he has then earned, and is also liable to imprisonment for a term which may extend to twelve weeks. Similarly, if he neglects or refuses without reasonable cause to join his ship or to proceed to sea or is absent without leave without sufficient reason, he is liable to forfeit out of his wages a sum not exceeding six days' pay, and is also liable to imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten weeks. Again, under Section 103, wilful disobedience on the part of a seaman is made punishable with imprisonment which may extend to four weeks.

Thus, the moment a seaman signs the agreement under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, he becomes subjected to a form of servitude, and both his person and his earnings are under the control of his employers. In other words, his signature to the articles of agreement places him in a position which is strikingly similar to a short term of enlistment. He is tied up to his ship as the soldier is to his camp, and if he leaves it without permission he is termed a deserter and is sent to the prison. That this law is very hard is undeniable.

It may be argued that the offence of desertion and the absence without leave should be severely punished with arrest and imprisonment in the interest of maintaining order on board ship and ensuring the safety of the ship. But this argument can only hold good when the ship is in deep waters and not when in a safe harbour. There is no reason why the seaman should not be allowed to leave his job, if he so desires, in a safe harbour, just as the worker on land can do. To bind a worker to his job against his will for a specified period is a form of indentured labour, a system considered as synonymous with slavery. Hence it is absolutely necessary that arrest and imprisonment as punishment for desertion, absence without leave or for insubordination should be abolished.

It is worth noting in this connection that arrest and imprisonment as punishments for desertion were abolished in the United States of America as early as the last century by virtue of the White Act of December

21, 1898.[1] This statute contained various provisions for improving the lot of sea-going labour, but its most important clause was one which limited the penalty for desertion to the forfeiture of any wages due and the loss of any effects left on board. Thus the right of a seaman to leave a vessel under civil rather than criminal penalties was recognised. The Act, however, applied only to American seamen in American and nearby foreign ports. In 1915, the scope of the law was further extended and the provisions were made more liberal. Under the new statute known as the Seamen's Act, imprisonment as a penalty for desertion for American seamen in all ports and for all seamen in American ports was abolished; and the seaman thus freed was entitled to receive one-half of his wages earned in any port of lading and discharge.[2] Thus the Act gave the seaman not only the right to leave his vessel and his job in any safe harbour but also the assurance of a temporary means of support, if he chose to do so.

Binding the seaman to the ship not only makes him a slave for the specified period but also results in great economic disadvantages to him. The heavy criminal penalties against desertion make it impossible for an Indian seaman to quit his vessel in a foreign port and take up another job with higher wages since his contract of service seldom expires there. If the penalties are abolished, the seaman will be able to leave his vessel in

[1] See *International Labour Review*, August 1938, p. 202.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 203.

any port in which wages are higher than those he is receiving under the existing agreement. Thus, by abolishing the penalty of imprisonment against desertion the Indian seaman will be free to seek the higher wage levels prevailing in European and American ports.

It is very strange that the Indian law does not contain any provisions under which the seaman can claim his discharge before the agreement expires. In the absence of any such provision, the seaman cannot legally quit his job even under exceptional circumstances such as ill-treatment by the master. If he leaves the ship, he becomes a deserter; if he does not, he may be further subjected to ill-treatment. Thus he is placed in an intolerable position. Unfortunately, the cases of ill-treatment of Indian seamen by the master are considerable in number. The right of a seaman to claim his discharge under special circumstances is generally recognised in the West. Thus, in Germany under Section 74 of the Seamen's Act of 1902, the seaman is entitled to claim his discharge if the master is guilty of gross neglect of his duties towards the seaman, especially by ill-treating him or allowing him to be ill-treated by other members of the crew, by unreasonably depriving him of food and drink, or by supplying him with provisions which have gone bad.[3] Similar is the case in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Greece to mention only a few more instances.[4]

[3] *Seamen's Articles of Agreement*, I. L. O. Report, p. 105.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 147, 163, 184, 337-38.

Again, the Indian law is unduly hard when it prescribes, under Section 100, that a seaman is liable to be punished with imprisonment extending to ten weeks for being absent without leave. In addition, he is liable to forfeit out of his wages a sum not exceeding two days' pay and in addition for every 24 hours of absence either a sum not exceeding six day's pay, or any expenses properly incurred in hiring a substitute. In this respect the law in most of the Western countries is far more liberal than the Indian law. In these countries the offence of absence without leave is not generally punishable with arrest and imprisonment, but merely with a fine. Thus in Germany, the seaman is punishable by a fine of not more than one month's pay in the case of absence without leave.[5] The amount of fine is further limited to not more than seven days' wages in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland.[6] Needless to state that the Indian law must be liberalised so as to bring it into line with the laws of other nations.

What has been said above in the case of absence without leave applies equally well in the case of wilful disobedience, an offence punishable with imprisonment extending to four weeks under Section 103 of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act. But in all the countries mentioned above, wilful disobedience is punishable with fine only, and not with arrest and imprisonment as in India.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 151, 168, 188.

CHAPTER XIII

INDIAN SEAMEN AND THE WORLD WAR

Indian seamen rendered splendid services to the British Empire during the Great War of 1914–1918. As many as 3,427 of them lost their lives as the result of enemy action, 47 died while interned in Germany and 1,200 were captured and imprisoned in enemy countries.[1]

The fact that Indian seamen stood firm to their posts and laid down their lives gallantly was admitted both by Government and shipowners. In a Notice issued in November 1918, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal stated: "The Admiral of the East Indies paid a glowing tribute to the services rendered by the *lascars*. He knew them both in peace and war. He found them behaving admirably in the face of danger. His opinion of the *lascars* is that properly led they can go anywhere and can accomplish anything. His Execellency the Governor of Bengal in Council fully endorsed the appreciation by the Admiral of the services rendered by the *lascars*. His Execellency is further pleased to note that of the large body of *lascars*, who went to sea from the port of Calcutta, not even a single *lascar*, although he had experienced torpedoe attacks more than once, refused to face the sea again. These considerations led his Execellency to bear testimony to

[1] *Legislative Assembly Debates*, January 24, 1923, pp. 1415-16.

the devotion to duty and the courage displayed by the *lascars* of Bengal and Calcutta."

These remarks apply with equal force to the *lascars* of Bombay and Karachi also. The bravery displayed by Indian seamen elicited recognition from shipowners as well. On May 4, 1918, Lord Inchcape of the P. and O. Company paid high tributes to their gallantry during the War. His Lordship said: "The *lascar's* sobriety and his calm demeanour in emergency and philosophic endurance of catastrophe were beyond all praise."[2] Again, in the words of Mr. W. R. S. Sharpe, ex-Chairman of the Bombay Port Trust, Indian seamen's "gallant and unflinching devotion to duty in the face of hardship and danger is second to none in the annals of the War."[3]

What was the reward received by these seamen for their heavy sacrifice?

It was loudly proclaimed by the British Government that the Great War was fought for making the world safe for democracy and for safeguarding the working class from the attacks of capitalist competition. The Preamble to Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles clearly stated:

"Conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of

[2] Quoted from *The History and Development of the Indian Seamen's Union*, Calcutta, p. 5.

[3] *The Times of India*, December 17, 1931.

the world are imperilled; and an improvement of these conditions is urgently required; as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provisions for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organisation of vocational and technical education and other measures."

With these solemn declarations before them and with their splendid record of sacrifice during the War, the seamen of India expected that a new order would be created for them by improving their miserable conditions of life and work. But to their great disillusionment no such order came into existence. As shown in the earlier chapters, their terrible conditions remained where they were. On the contrary, they became worse in certain respects. For instance, unemployment became more severe; the extent of bribery increased; wages did not go up in proportion to the rise in the cost of living. Practically, none of the conditions mentioned in the Preamble improved. The hours of work remained unregulated; no proper agency to regulate the supply of seamen was established; an adequate living wage was not

secured; protection against unemployment, sickness and old age was not provided for; and finally no facilities for vocational education were afforded. The exploitation of Indian seamen by British shipowners continued as ruthlessly and mercilessly as before, and the Governments, both British and Indian, did not come to the rescue of the helpless seamen. No doubt the British Empire was saved and made safer for British shipowners to exploit India's cheap labour.

This was how Indian seamen were rewarded for their splendid war services!

CHAPTER XIV

SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS

The following is a summary of the more important suggestions made in the preceding chapters:

Recruitment: As the present system of recruiting seamen allows ample scope for bribery and corruption, it should be replaced by a Joint Board system. Seamen should be recruited only through a Joint Maritime Board consisting of an equal number of representatives of seamen and shipowners. The Joint Board should keep a register of all seamen in each port. The names in the register under each category should be arranged according to the last date of discharge of each seaman, the man discharged first being placed at the top of the list. Men should be engaged according to their turn on the register and should be discharged after a prescribed period of continuous service.

Unemployment: In order to reduce unemployment among seamen and to mitigate its severity, the following remedies should be undertaken. First, fresh recruitment for a limited period should be stopped; second, all seamen on reaching fifty-five years of age should be retired and given pensions; third, men should be employed in strict rotation; fourth, the Government should see that the employment of Indian seamen on British ships is not reduced and that a statutory system

of quotas is adopted, there being a ratio of percentage of Indian seamen on all British ships trading with the East; fifth, in order to eliminate the danger of Indian seamen being excluded from European ships on the ground that they are used to debase wages and general working conditions of all seamen, the Government of India should improve the standard of Indian seafarers by securing to them decent conditions of life and work.

Hours of Work and Holidays with Pay: The hours of work of Indian seamen should be regulated by legislation and that they should be fixed in accordance with the following provisions of the International Labour Convention adopted in 1936: An 8–hour day and a 56–hour week at sea for all watch-keeping deck crew, and in port 48 hours a week for daymen; for engine-room crew 56 and 48 hours at sea and in port respectively, while the catering staff are to have, at sea, 12 hours' rest out of 24 on passenger ships and 10 hours' work a day on others, and 8 hours in port. All hours in excess of these should be treated as overtime and duly compensated as such. Similarly, the I. L. Convention concerning holidays with pay for seamen should be ratified by India, and holidays should be granted in accordance with its following provisions: Twelve working days for masters, officers and wireless operators, and nine working days for other members of the crew.

Wages: In view of the fact that the existing wages of a vast majority of Indian seamen fall below the sub-

sistence level, the rates should be substantially raised and nobody should be paid below a comfortable living wage. Minimum wage legislation should also be adopted. The wage rates of Calcutta seamen should be raised to the level of Bombay rates. Racial descrimination in wages should be done away with and Indian seamen should be paid the same wages as European seamen with whom they work.

Accommodation : The existing scale of accommodation on board ship, which is very inadequate in comparison with that provided in Great Britain and some other countries, should be increased so as to bring it into line with the provisions of at least the British Merchant Shipping Act. Definite rules should be laid down in the matter of accommodation, and the new Regulations concerning crew accommodation issued in 1937 by the Board of Trade of the United Kingdom should be adopted in India.

Food : Fruit should be included in the diet of seamen to be provided on board ship, as in Great Britain and Finland. There should be provision for fresh fish, as is the case in Yugoslavia. Meals should be served at regular intervals and should be hot at the time of being served. The law regarding the inspection of food supplies on board ship should be strictly enforced in every port, and that the shipowners who fail to comply with its provisions should be heavily fined. Racial discrimination contained in Section 86 of the Indian

Merchant Shipping Act, prescribing lower rates to Indian seamen by way of compensation for bad or insufficient food, should be abolished; and Indian seamen should be entitled to the same amount of compensation as is to be paid to European seamen.

Medical Service on Board Ship: Every ship must have a hospital consisting of two or more beds for sick seamen suffering from dysentery, diarrhoea, gastritis, etc., in order to segregate them from others who occupy the same room. The ship's medicine chest must be located in the ship's hospital, and must contain such recognised drugs as are in common use at present by the medical profession. The medical officer of the company must be held responsible for the medicine chest to be in order according to the regulations. The ship's hospital should be inspected by competent authority in every port so as to see that it is kept in proper condition. Those drugs that can be obtained in the form of pills or tablets must replace the present drugs liquid or crystalline to prevent any mistake on the part of inexperienced persons doing work as compounders or dispensers. The Medical Guide should be thoroughly revised by a committee consisting of European and Indian doctors who have experience of the Indian Mercantile Marine Service.

Housing: As the extent of accommodation in the Indian Sailors' Home at Bombay is inadequate, an additional Home should be erected so as to make provision for at least a thousand seamen at one time. A similar

Home should be erected in the port of Calcutta. The management of the Homes should be wholly in the hands of seamen through their elected representatives. Separate living quarters, with nominal rent, should be provided in Bombay, Calcutta, and Karachi for the benefit of those seamen who desire to live in these ports with their families. These quarters should be provided by the State and not by employers. The State should come forward with its own schemes of providing housing for seamen and make it obligatory on the shipowners to share a fixed proportion of the cost by imposing on them an additional tax in proportion to the number of seamen each company employs. Similarly, the Port Trusts should be asked to contribute their quota towards the cost of the schemes.

Recreation and Education : Adequate provision should be made for the recreation of seamen during their stay in their home ports. The authorities of the Indian Sailors' Home, Bombay, should spend a substantial amount of their income every year for providing amusement and recreation to the inmates. The severe discipline to which the inmates are at present subjected to should be slackened, having regard to the peculiar ways of life of seamen, which arise out of the very nature of their calling. The Seamen's Welfare Association of Calcutta, which has all along been attending to the needs of European seamen only, should abandon its policy of racial discrimination and provide recreation for seamen of all nationalities.

Literacy classes for seamen should be organised in the ports of Bombay and Calcutta. Teaching in them should be accompanied by recreation so that the students are not bored by the teaching. The subject-matter of the lessons should have a direct relation with the day-to-day life of seafarers and the problems they have to face. Every important port should have a Seamen's Home where books written in simple language and containing matter that would interest the seafarer should be kept. A system of libraries on board ship possessing books in Indian languages should also be established, as is done in Great Britain and other countries. In view of the fact that a working knowledge of English is of special importance to Indian seamen, provision should be made to impart its knowledge to Indian crews.

Of the six scholarships to be granted by the Government of India to the cadets on the "Dufferin," three should be open only to the sons of seamen and that they should be of Rs. 50 each per month. Each Port Trust should found a special scholarship to be awarded to the sons of seamen. The sons of seamen from Portuguese India should not be prevented from joining the "Dufferin," which they cannot do at present on the mere technical ground that they are non-British subjects. In order to ensure employment to every "Dufferin" cadet, the ships plying in Indian waters should be compelled by the Government to employ a certain proportion of the cadets.

Protection of Health: Special facilities for the treatment and cure of venereal and other diseases among

seamen should be made available in all principal ports. The valuable recommendations made by the Indian Delegation of the British Social Hygiene Council with regard to the prevention and cure of venereal diseases should be given effect to. The policy of racial discrimination, which is followed at present in some public hospitals in Calcutta and Bombay in the matter of admission of seamen, should be done away with, and Indian seamen should be admitted to all those hospitals where European seamen are admitted. Similarly, the proceeds of the Port Health Dues Fund collected at the port of Calcutta should be utilised for the benefit of all seamen irrespective of their colour or nationality. Arrangements should be made in the Venereal Clinic founded by the Seamen's Welfare Association, Calcutta, for admitting in-door patients suffering from venereal diseases.

Along with the provision of facilities for the treatment of venereal diseases, measures for the prevention of those diseases should also be undertaken. This can be carried out in two directions: First, the organisation of healthy recreation; second, educative propaganda to show the dangers of venereal diseases. With a view to combating venereal diseases among seamen, the Government of India and the Local Governments of the maritime provinces should adhere to the Belgian Agreement which has been signed by the Governments of almost all the important maritime countries. The Government should also give effect to the Geneva Recommendation regarding seamen's welfare in ports adopted in 1936.

Social Insurance: A unified scheme of social insurance for seamen should be established covering the risks of (1) industrial accidents and occupational diseases, (2) unemployment, (3) sickness, (4) invalidity, old age and death. The scheme should be compulsory and not voluntary; it should be administered by the State and should be on a non-contributory basis. If, however, it is decided to have a contributory scheme, the contribution from seamen should not be more than 5 per cent. of their wages.

The possibilities of giving Indian seamen the right to compensation, under the Indian Workmen's Compensation Act, while serving on ships registered in the United Kingdom, should be explored by the Government of India and the Home Office. The Indian Workmen's Compensation Act should also undergo the following changes among others. First, Section 3 should be amended so that an accident should be deemed to arise in connection with the employment if it occurs during transport between shore and vessel. Second, the employer should be made liable to pay compensation for accidents occurring during repatriation. Third, accidents arising in connection with rescue and salvage of human beings or goods should in all cases be compensatable. Fourth, provision should be made for entitling the seaman injured outside India to receive wages from the time he is landed until his return to a proper return port. Fifth, the Act should be amended to place the onus of proof

on the shipowner that the disappearance of a seaman at sea did not occur in connection with the employment.

The National Health Insurance Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act of Great Britain should be so amended as to provide for the transfer of the health and unemployment insurance contributions compulsorily payable by shipowners in respect of Indian seamen, to the Government of India, with a stipulation that the transferred amount should be used for the purpose of providing benefits to Indian seamen.

National Maritime Board: A National Maritime Board similar to that of the United Kingdom should be set up in India. The objects of the Board should be to prevent and adjust differences between shipowners and seamen, to establish, revise and maintain national standard rates of wages and approved conditions of employment, and to establish a single source of supply of seamen. The Bord should consist of an equal number of representatives of shipowners and seamen.

The Merchant Shipping Law: Arrest and imprisonment as punishment for desertion, absence without leave or insubordination should be abolished, as they are unduly hard. Even before the termination of his agreement, the seaman should be allowed to leave his job, if he so desires, in a safe harbour, as in the U. S. A. Similarly, the Indian law should contain provisions under which the seaman can claim his discharge before the agreement expires under special circumstances such as ill-treatment.

APPENDIX A

TABLES SHOWING WAGE RATES

TABLE I

THE PRESENT BOMBAY RATES OF WAGES
SINCE 1923

(On all lines excepting P. & O. Co.)

Fixed by the L'ner's Conference held on September 27, 192.

Deck			Coasting Rs.	a.	Home Rs.	a.
Serang Mahomedan	...	...	55	0	65	0
Serang, Hindu	...	...	52	0	65	0
1st Tindal	...	...	40	0	46	0
2nd do	...	...	32	0	35	0
3rd do	...	...	30	0	34	0
Cassab	...	...	27	0	32	0
Winchman	...	...	29	0	34	0
Seacunny	...	...	50	0	60	0
Lascars ¼ @	...	...	18	0	22	0
Do ¼ @	...	...	21	0	25	0
Do ¼ @	...	...	23	0	28	0
Do ¼ @	...	...	26	0	30	0
Lascar Boys	...	...	13	0	15	0
Bhandary	...	...	26	0	30	0
Do Mate	...	...	15	0	20	0
Topas	...	...	20	0	23	0
Carpenter	...	...	75	0	120	0
Engine						
Serang	...	...	55	0	65	0
1st Tindal	...	...	38	0	40	0
2nd do	...	...	35	0	37	0
3rd do	...	...	32	0	35	0
Cassab	...	...	30	0	35	0

	Coasting Rs.	a.	Home Rs.	a.
Engine				
Donkeyman	30	0	35	0
Hydraulicman	40	0	45	0
Iceman or Freezer	35	0	37	0
Fireman	25	0	27	0
Coal Trimmers	18	0	21	0
Lampman	28	0	32	0
Bhandary	25	0	30	0
Do Mate	17	0	20	0
Oilman	28	0	32	0
Pumpman	52	0	62	0
Coal Trimmer Serang	37	0	40	0
*Lascar's Average	22	0	26	0
Saloon				
Butler I/c	75	0	85	0
Do	70	0	75	0
Butler, 2nd class	60	0	65	0
Chief Cook	60	0	70	0
2nd Cook C.	30	0	40	0
Do P.	35	0	40	0
Curry Cook	35	0	40	0
3rd Cook P.	22	8	28	0
Do C.	20	0	22	8
4th Cook	16	0	20	0
Baker	60	0	70	0
Do Second	45	0	50	0
Baker, Third or Assistant Baker ...	30	0	35	0
Do Mate	20	0	22	8
Chief Cook and Baker	65	0	75	0
Pantryman P.	30	0	40	0
Do 1st class	40	0	45	0

Saloon Contd.	Coasting Rs.	a.	Home Rs.	a.
Do 2nd class	35	0	40	0
Do Cargo ship	33	0	37	0
Do Mate	18	0	20	0
Butcher	45	0	50	0
Do Mate	18	0	25	0
Topas Saloon	20	0	22	8
Do Stock	20	0	22	8
Scullions	20	0	22	8
Head Waiter C.	35	0	40	0
Head Waiter P. O. L.	40	0	45	0
Saloon Boys				
1/3rd 1st year	23	0	26	0
Do 2/5th	25	0	30	0
Do over 5	27	0	34	0
Messroom Boys C.	25	0	30	0
Messroom Boy without assistant or mate	28	0	33	0
Messroom Boys O. L.	27	0	34	0
Messroom Assistant	20	0	25	0
Do Mate	14	0	16	0
Chief Engineer Boys—				
1st year	23	0	26	0
2/5th year	25	0	30	0
Over 5	27	0	34	0
Captain Boy—				
1st year	23	0	26	0
2/5th year	25	0	30	0
Over 5 years	27	0	34	0
Officers' Boys—				
Same as G. Servant	23-27	0	26-34	0
Marconi Boy	8	0	10	0
Saloon crew cook	35	0	40	0

Saloon Contd.			Coasting Rs.	a.	Home Rs.	a.
Do Mate	...	...	16	0	20	0
Troop Baker	...	...	50	0	55	0
Do 2nd Baker	...	...	40	0	45	0
Do Baker Mate	...	...	20	0	22	8
Do Cook	...	...	50	0	55	0
Do Assistant Cook	...	...	45	0	50	0
Deck Steward	...	...	27	0	34	0
Barman	...	...	35	0	40	0
Bell Boy	...	...	23	0	26	0
Knifeman	...	...	26	0	30	0
Laundryman (Dhobi)	...	...	40	0	45	0

+ Certified necessary
C. Cargo ship local liners
P. Passenger ship local liners
P. O. L. Passenger other liners
O. L. Other liner

TABLE II

BOMBAY RATES OF WAGES
IN 1920

(On all lines excepting P. & O. Co.)

In force from November 19, 1920

Deck Department		6 months Coasting Rs.	12 momths Home Line Rs.
D. Serang	... ...	56-62	69-75
Tindel	... ...	44	46
2nd Tindel	... ...	34	37
3rd do.	... ...	32	36
Winchman	... ...	31	36
Cassab	... ...	31	36
Seacunney	... ...	50-60	63-69
Lascar	... ...	20-22-24-27	22-25-28-30
Bhandary	... ...	27	34
Do.	Mate ...	20	25
Deck Topas	... ...	25	28
L. Boy.	... ...	14	15
Carpenter	... ...	75	120
Engine Department			
Serang	... ...	62	75
Tindel	... ...	40	44
2nd Tindel	... ...	37	37
3rd do.	... ...	34	35
Donkeymen	... ...	34	35
Cassab	... ...	34	35
Oilman	... ...	31	32
Lampman	... ...	31	32

		6 months Coasting Rs.		12 months Home Line Rs.	
Fireman ...	...	29		30	
Coal Trimmers	...	21		24	
Bhandary ...	...	29		30	
Do. Mate.	...	21		25	
Freezer ...	...	37		39	
Hydraulic ...	...	45		50	
Coal Trimmers Serang	...	37		44	
Saloon Department		Rs.	a.	Rs.	a.
Butler ...	...	80	0	90	0
Chief Cook and Baker	...	75	0	85	0
Chief Cook ...	...	70	0	80	0
2nd Cook ...	...	40	0	45	0
3rd Cook ...	...	22	8	28	0
4th Cook ...	...	20	0	22	8
Butcher ...	...	50	0	55	0
Butcher Mate ...	...	22	8	25	0
Baker ...	...	65	0	70	0
Baker's Mate ...	...	20	0	22	8
Scullion ...	...	20	0	22	8
Topass ...	...	20	0	22	8
Pantryman ...	...	40	0	45	0
Pantryman Mate	...	20	0	22	8
Mess Room Boy	...	30	0	35	0
Do. Mate	...	15	0		
Marcony Boy ...	...	10	0	10	0
Head Waiter ...	...	45	0	50	0
Troop Baker ...	...	50	0	55	0
Do. Mate ...	...	20	0	22	0
Do. Cook ...	...	50	0	55	0

	6 months Coasting Rs. a.	12 months Home Line Rs. a.
Assistant Baker and Assistant Cook	45 0	50 0
Gl. Sevt. Ch. E. B. and Capt. Boy	23-26-30	26-30-35
	1 year, over 1 and under 5 years.	5 years and over.

TABLE III

BOMBAY RATES OF WAGES
IN 1915

(On all Lines excepting P. & O. Co.)

		Home Trade Rates	Foreign going Rates	
Deck Department				
Carpenter	...	Rs. 50 to 65		(Rs. 60 to 75-80)
		Hindu Crew	Hindu Crew	Mahomedan Crew
L. Serang	...	Rs. 37	Rs. 40	Rs. 42 (Rs. 45 to Senior Serangs)
1 Tindel	...	Rs. 32	Rs. 32	Rs. 32
2nd do	...	,, 27	,, 27	,, 27
Seacunny	...	,, 27	,, 37	,, 42 (Rs. 45 to Senior Seacunny)
Winchman	...	,, 24	,, 24	,, 24
Cassab	...	,, 20	,, 24	,, 24
Lascars	...	,, 17	,, 20 each	,, 19 Average*
Bhandary	...	,, 17 each	,, 20	,, 20
Do Mate	...	,,	,,	,, 12 to 15
Do Topass	.	,, 14 to 15	,, 15 to 17	,, 15 to 17
Engine Department				
F. Serang	...	Rs. 37	Rs. 42	(Rs. 45 to Senior Serangs)
1st Tindel	...	,, 27	,, 29	

* (1st Class Lascars Rs. 22, 2nd Class Rs. 20, 3rd Class Rs. 16 4th Class Rs. 12).

	Home Trade Rates	Foreign going Rates
2nd do ...	Rs. 25	Rs. 27
3rd do ...	„ 23	„ 25
Donkeyman ...	„ 22	„ 25
Cassab ...	„ 22	„ 24
Freezer ...	„ 22	„ 24
Hydraulic ...	„ 37	„ 40
Lampman ...	„ 21	„ 23
Oilman ...	„ 21	„ 22
Fireman ...	„ 19 each	„ 20 each
Bhandary ...	„ 19	„ 20
Do Mate ...	„	„ 12 to 15
Coal Trimmers.	„ 14 each	„ 15 each
Electrician ...	„ 40 to 50	„ 60 to 75
Boiler Maker...	„ 40 to 60	„ 60 to 90

Saloon Department

Butler or Steward	Rs. 40	Rs. 50 to 60,75
Chief Cook ...	„ 40	„ 50 to 60
2nd do ...	„ 20	„ 30
3rd do ...	„ 15	„ 20
4th do ...	„ 10	„ 15
Chief Cook and Baker ...	„ 50	„ 55
Baker ...	„ 35	„ 50 to 60
Do Mate ...	„ 15	„ 23 to 25
Butcher ...	„ 30	„ 35 to 40
Do Mate ...	„ 15	„ 20
Scullion ...	„ 14 to 15	„ 15 to 17
1st Class Pantryman.	„ 20	„ 45, 35, 23
1st Class do Mate.		„ 15

	Home Trade Rates	Foreign Going Rates
2nd Class Pantryman.	Rs.	Rs. 30 to 35
2nd Class do Mate.		„ 15
General Servants (Officer's, Engineer's and Cabin Boy, etc.) ...	„ 20 each	„ 23 to 25
Mess Room Boy	„ 20	„ 23 to 25
Do Mate ...	„	„ 15
Saloon Topass.	„ 14 to 15	„ 15 to 17
Punkha Boys...	„ 10	„ 12 to 15

N. B.—If any company or ship's officers in their respective departments wishing to pay any more wages than the above quoted ratings, they should only provide them by monthly bonuses, without entering in the articles.

If the steamers are chartered by the Government for trooping season, these men should be provided with 25 per cent. increase in their wages at the time of their final discharge.

TABLE IV

THE PRESENT BOMBAY RATES OF WAGES

(On P. and O. Ships)

Deck Department					Rs.	a.
Serang	...	...	...	...	80	0
Tindal	...	...	...	...	51	0
2nd Tindal	...	...	...	...	45	0
3rd do.	...	...	...	...	39	0
Lascar	...	...	...	...	32	0
Do.	...	...	...	...	29	0
Do.	...	...	...	...	26	0
Do.	...	...	...	...	23	0
Do.	...	...	...	...	14	0
Bhandary	...	...	...	...	34	0
Topass	...	...	...	...	30	0
Engine Department						
Serang	...	...	...	...	80	0
Paniwalla	...	...	...	...	44	0
Do.	...	...	...	...	40	0
Do.	...	...	...	...	36	8
Tindal	...	...	...	...	39	0
Store Keeper		...	...	...	35	0
Lampman	...	...	...	...	32	0
Fireman	...	...	...	...	30	0
2nd do.	...	...	...	...	24	0
Bhandary	...	...	...	...	34	0
Do. Mate		...	...	...	19	0
C. T. Serang		...	...	...	50	0
Coal Trimmer		...	...	...	24	0

Purser's or Saloon Department	Rs.
Head waiter	100
Pantryman	100
Asstt. do.	65
2nd do.	65
General Servant	25-40-45-50
Mess Room Boy	40-45-50
Asstt. do.	25
Laundryman	40-45
Chief Cook	150-200
Ship Cook	60
Fish Cook	60-100
2nd do.	60-65
Curry Cook	50
Baker	100
Do. Mate	40
Butcher Mate	35
Knifeman	30
Iceman	30
Scullion	30
Topass	30
Boys	15

TABLE V

BOMBAY RATES OF WAGES
IN 1912 & 1914

(On P. and O. Ships)

			1912		1914	
Deck Department			Rs.	a.	Rs.	a.
Serang...	...	...	36	8	42	0
1st Tindal	...	...	31	0	33	0
2nd do.	...	...	25	0	27	0
3rd do.	...	...	23	0	25	0
Lascar...	...	...	20	0	22	0
Do. ...	...	...	18	0	20	0
Do. ...	...	...	16	0	18	0
Do. ...	...	...	14	0	16	0
Do. ...	...	...	12	0	14	0
Do. ...	...	...	11	0	13	0
Do. ...	...	...	10	0	11	0
Bhandary	...	...	20	0	22	0
Topass...	...	...	13	0	17	0
Engine Department						
Serang...	...	...	36	0	40	0
1st Paniwalla	...	...	26	0	27	0
2nd dc.	...	...	24	0	25	0
3rd do.	...	...	22	0	23	0
Tindal ...	...	...	24	0	26	0
Storekeeper	...	...	22	8	23	8
Lampman	...	...	19	8	21	0
Fireman, 1st	...	...	18	0	20	0
Do. 2nd	...	...	13	0	15	0

	1912		1914	
	Rs.	a.	Rs.	a.
Bhandary	20	0	22	0
Do. Mate	10	0	12	0
C. T. Serang	26	8	27	8
Coal Trimmer	13	0	15	0
Purser's Department				
1st Sal. P'man, Mail ...	61	4	64	4
Do. Inter	56	4	59	4
2nd Sal. P'man, Mail ...	43	12	46	12
Do. Inter	33	12	36	12
Chief Cook (Passenger) ...	108	12	111	12
Baker	78	12	81	12
Cook (Cargo)	48	12	51	12
Baker (Cargo)	33	12	36	12
Troop Cook	63	12	66	12
Do. Baker	53	12	56	12
Assistant Cook	48	12	51	12
2nd Cook	38	12	41	12
Curry Cook	33	12	36	12
Scullion	18	12	21	12
Assistant Baker	38	12	41	12
Baker's Mate	18	12	21	12
Butcher (Mail)	63	12	66	12
Do. (Cargo)	48	12	51	12
Assistant Butcher	43	12	46	12
Butcher's Mate	18	12	21	12
Iceman	19	12	22	12
Knifeman	18	12	21	12
Topass...	15	12	18	12
Pantry Boy	8	12	11	12
Laundryman	30	0	33	0
Sal. Waiter & M. R. S. ...	25	12	28	12

TABLE VI

WAGE RATES AT CALCUTTA

Ratings		Rates in 1914	Present Rates (Since 1919)
Deck Staff		Rs.	Rs.
Deck Serang ...	...	35	60
Seacunny ...	...	35	55
Tindal ...	...	28	37
2nd Tindal ...	...	24	30
Cassab ...	...	22	30
Winchman ...	...	21	28
Lascars ...	...	16 (average)	18-25
Bhandary ...	...	14	25
Topass ...	...	14	22
Engine Room Staff			
Engine Serang ...	...	35	60
1st Tindal ...	...	26	35
2nd Tindal ...	...	24	30
3rd Tindal ...	...	22	28
Cassab ...	...	24	28
Donkeyman ...	...	23	28
Oilman ...	...	20	26
Fireman ...	...	17	23
Trimmer ...	...	12	18
Bhandary ...	...	17	25
Topass ...	...	14	22
Saloon Staff			
Butler-in-charge	...		80
Butler under steward	...		75
Baker Mate ...	...		30

	Rates in 1914 Rs.	Present Rates (Sinoo 1919) Rs.
Baker		70
Chief Cook		70
2nd Cook	25	40
3rd Cook		25
4th Cook		20
Chief Cook & Baker ...	50	75
Saloon Boy	18	32-33-35
Half Saloon Boy ...		15
Captain's Boy	18	30-32-35
Chief Engineer's boy ...	18	30-32-35
Officer's Boy	18	30-32-35
Marconi Boy		30
Mess Room Boy ...		33
Mess Room Mate ...		16
Butcher		45 to 50
Butcher's Mate		25
Scullion		24
Topass	14	22
Pantryman 1st Class ...		37-40
Pantryman 2nd Class ...		35
Pantryman Mate ...		20
2nd Class Butler ...		50

APPENDIX B

SCALE OF RATIONS

General Scale Applicable to Crews Engaged at Ports other than Ports in the Presidency of Bombay and the Province of Sind

	Ordinary			Cold weather		
	lb.	oz.	dr.	lb.	oz.	dr.
Rice or atta (Indian whole wheat flour), daily (*a*)	1	4	0	1	4	0
Flour or atta (Indian whole wheat flour), daily	0	8	0	0	8	0
Dal, daily (*a*)	0	5	0	0	5	0
Ghee, daily	0	2	0	0	3	0
Salt, daily	0	0	8	0	0	8
Curry stuff, daily (*b*)	0	1	0	0	1	0
Dry fish at sea, 3 days a week (*c*) ...	0	4	0	0	4	0
Dry fish at sea, daily (*c*) ...		...			...	
Fresh meat free from bone at sea, 4 days a week and in harbour, daily	0	4	0	0	4	0
Vegetables dry at sea such as onions, potatoes, daily (*d*)	0	10	0	0	10	0
Vegetables fresh in harbour, daily ...	0	10	0	0	10	0
Tamarind, daily	0	1	0	0	1	0
Tea, daily	0	0	4	0	0	8
Sugar, daily	0	1	8	0	2	0
Condensed milk, per week ...	1/3	0	0	1/3	0	0
Lime juice, daily (*e*)	0	1	0	0	1	0
Oil (mustard), daily	0	0	12	0	0	12
Water as required		...			...	

Special Scale Applicable to Crews Engaged at Ports in the Presidency of Bombay and the Province of Sind

	Ordinary			Cold weather		
	lb.	oz.	dr.	lb.	oz.	dr.
Rice or atta (Indian whole wheat flour), daily (*a*)	1	6	0	1	6	0
Flour or atta (Indian whole wheat flour), daily	0	8	0	0	8	0
Dal, daily (*a*)	0	4	0	0	4	0
Ghee, daily	0	2	0	0	3	0
Salt, daily	0	0	8	0	0	8
Curry stuff, daily (*b*)	0	0	10	0	0	10
Dry fish at sea, 3 days a week (*c*) ...		...			...	
Dry fish at sea, daily (*c*) ...	0	4	0	0	4	0
Fresh meat free from bone at sea, 4 days a week and in harbour, daily	0	4	0	0	4	0
Vegetables dry at sea such as onions, potatoes, daily (*d*)... ...	0	10	0	0	10	0
Vegetables fresh in harbour, daily ...	0	10	0	0	10	0
Tamarind, daily		...			...	
Tea, daily	0	0	4	0	0	8
Sugar, daily	0	1	8	0	2	0
Condensed milk, per week ...	$\frac{1}{3}$	0	0	$\frac{1}{3}$	0	0
Lime juice, daily (*e*)	0	1	0	0	1	0
Oil (mustard), daily		...			...	
Water as required		...			...	

NOTE.—When a lascar is ill and off duty, biscuits, tea and sugar should be given to him with arrowroot or sago as needed.

The expression "cold weather" is applicable :—

(i) In the Northern Hemisphere during the months Octo-

ber to March inclusive and North of Latitude 20° N. in the China Sea and Pacific Ocean, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and North of 30° N. in the Atlantic, and

(ii) In the Southern Hemisphere during the months May to September inclusive and South of 30° S.

(*a*) In bad weather, when unable to cook, 6½ oz. biscuits and 2 oz. sugar in addition to the quantity provided in the scale, may be substituted in the place of rice and dal.

(*b*) Includes kokam or tamarind in Special scale only.

(*c*) Tinned or pickled herrings may be used in lieu on one of the fish ration days.

(*d*) Not less than half should be potatoes.

(*e*) The daily allowance of lime juice shall be served out to the crew as soon as they have been at sea for ten days and during the remainder of the voyage except during such time as they are in harbour and are there supplied with fresh provisions.

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